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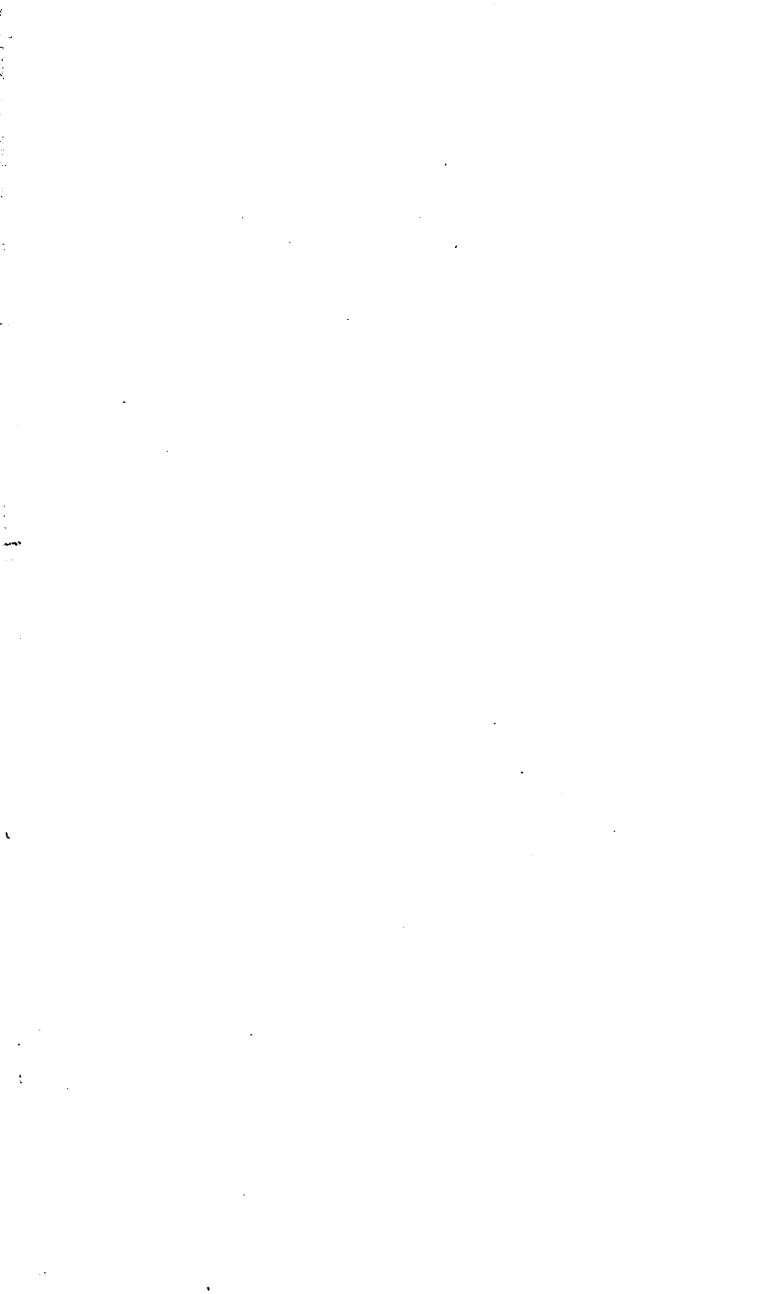
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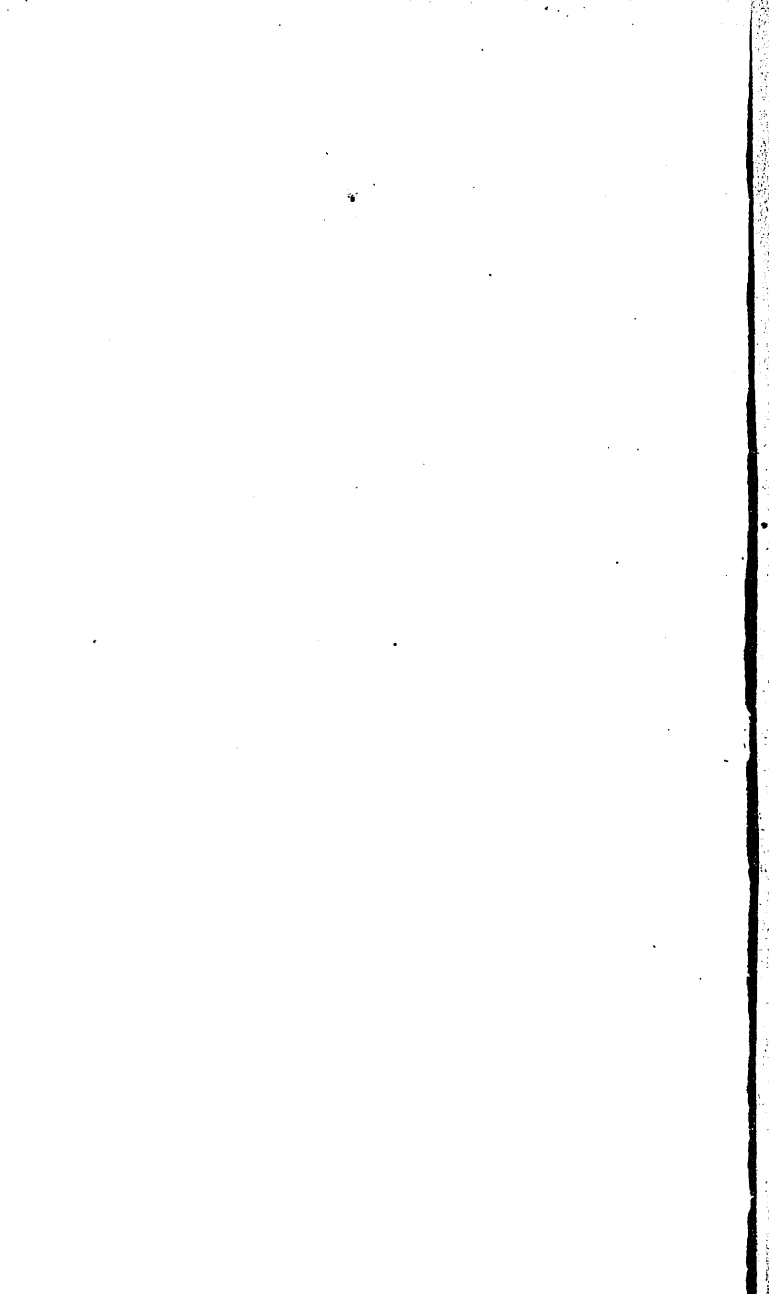
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A FESTIVAL YEAR
WITH
GREAT PREACHERS;
OR,
TWENTY-EIGHT SERMONS
UPON
THE FESTIVALS OF THE CHURCH.

EDITED FROM THE LATIN
BY
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PREFACE.

A COURSE of Sermons for the Sundays of the Christian Year, seemed to be necessarily incomplete, if no provision were made—not only for such Festivals as take the precedence of an ordinary Sunday, but also for those other Feasts, all of which must become Dominical within a limited number of years. “A Year with Great Preachers” therefore is rightly followed by “A Festival Year with Great Preachers,” prepared upon the same plan and adapted for a like use.

It is probable that the present book may be of more use than its predecessors, inasmuch as, whilst many of the Clergy have a large Collection of Sunday Sermons, their stock of Festival Sermons is often but a small one. To this circumstance, must in great part be attributed the common fact, that when an ordinary festival falls upon a Sunday, beyond the recitation of the Collect or a change in the Lessons, the special teaching of the day is wholly overlooked.

I have no fear that those who so kindly wel-

comed my former book, will look coldly on this one, which must be regarded as the completion of it; nay, I believe that they will the more readily receive it, since, in many respects, it will be found to be worthier of their acceptance.

Like every other pursuit in the world, this particular kind of literary work requires for its successful performance a certain τέχνη or "art" which art can be gained only by the continual exercise of it. These twenty-eight sermons have been selected from no less than *five thousand seven hundred and seventy-two* sermons, which numbers are obtained by adding together the sermons in my possession, being the production of the fourteen authors whom I have placed under contribution: With such a large number of sermons before one, the judgment is oftentimes sorely perplexed as to which it would be the best to use; and then when the selection has been made, the translating, condensing, expanding, and adapting processes follow, and which involve no small amount of patience, thought, and skill. To resolve pages of closely and continuously printed contracted black letter Latin, into a modern sermonet broken up into defined sections, is not the work of a few minutes. After all is finished a doubt will ever and anon intrude itself, that the

most appropriate sermon has not been chosen, and that the one selected has not after all been subjected to the most judicious treatment which it was capable of receiving.

I do not for a moment suppose that I have fully mastered this art, being but too fully aware of my many deficiencies for such a task, as well as of the manifold difficulties which multiply with every successive advance in this particular study. All that I can hope is that should any evidence of slender scholarship be visible in the following pages, this defect may be in some degree atoned for by the loving and reverential spirit in which I have striven to execute my work.

I wish it to be distinctly borne in mind, that these little homilies are not put forward as if claiming to be model sermons, but that they are to be considered rather as *sermon studies* out of which, by the addition of individual thought some really powerful sermons are capable of being produced. If any merit may be discoverable in them, that which Ovid said of Callimachus a fellow poet, may be in truth applied to myself, "*Ingenio non valet ; arte valet.*"

By some readers, perhaps, the simple style and unaffected language of many of the following sermons may be objected to. Such simplicity, however, is the result not of accident

but of design; it represents an attempt to express the sense of the original in the fewest possible words; and to couch a fine thought in very plain speech.

With the French school of preaching, abounding as it does in high-flown description, in oratorical display, in artificiality of tone, in exaggerated appeals to the feelings, and in almost profane invocations of the Godhead, I have not the smallest sympathy. Yet it may be, that in my extreme desire to avoid this Scylla of polished verbiage I may have fallen upon the Carybdis of a style which is to the other extreme, rough and uncouth. The true mean is always difficult to discover, and still more difficult to adhere to when it may be found out.

Others again may object, that the tone and exegesis of these little Sermons are not in harmony with much—nay, with the larger portion of the preaching of the day. If this should be really so, I accept the fact with extreme thankfulness. The great and good men whose minds are reflected in the following pages were too profound thinkers, too humble-minded Christians, too great scholars, too intent upon the saving of souls, too jealous for the honour and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, to preach

to hearts needing a dogmatic saving faith and a sacramental life, about "intellectual development," "the Christology of the age," "the Psychology of Christianity," and the thousand and one high-sounding fictions of shallow thought which appear week by week among the number of the advertisements of Sunday sermons. And with what result? During the recent debates in Convocation and elsewhere upon the Athanasian Creed it was continually remarked, that the attacks upon it were mainly the result of the teaching from our pulpits for some years past; that our sermons were becoming every week less and less dogmatic and expository, and more and more pictorial, conversational, and emotional; and, that consequently, the great mass of the laity had well-nigh ceased to reverence in any degree revealed truth, or to hold in any respect the traditional teaching of the Church Catholic. It is to be wished that these Sermons may exercise some little influence in an opposite direction.

Some persons, whose opinion is of great weight, have rather reproached me for not devoting myself to what they are pleased to consider to be more original and attractive work; for not writing, in short, sermons of my own. My answer to this charge is a twofold one. From

the nature of their contents these series of Sermons by "Great Preachers" will have a more permanent value than those composed in the present day by any preacher however eminent—an infinitely greater value both intrinsically and extrinsically than any written by myself either could have or ever would have. Also I believe that such men as Voragine, Escobar, Harpius, and the rest, have not yet done their full and perfect work in the world ; that they are neither old-fashioned nor worn out ; that they will put a new life and communicate a new knowledge into generations of men who will hereafter arise to turn their holy learning to a better account than that to which it has ever as yet been applied. I would indulge in the hope, God grant that it be not a vain one, that when the editor, the publisher, and the printer of these little books shall have been long since gathered to their rest, and the volumes themselves are to be purchased for a few pence, exposed for sale upon some book-stall in companionship with the other relics of an almost obsolete literature, they may be lighted upon by some inquiring student, open to him a fresh field for his reading, and impart a new and powerful tone to his thoughts. The more earnestly we regard life, the heavier does responsibility of it deepen

upon us, and we learn to see in it a very short day—and sometimes a very cold and wintry one too—in which we are bidden to sow such seeds as we can of love, joy, goodness, and truth, whilst we can ; that when we depart from hence and are “no more seen,” we may leave behind us in the world some small token for good. It is just such a token as this that I desire these little volumes to become.

And now, closing this preface, with the books which have been my companions for the last several months past all lying around me, it seems to me as if I was parting almost with old familiar friends ; and with this parting there is mingled a regret that so many goodly volumes, folios, and quartos, so rich in wisdom and knowledge, should be so poorly represented in my pages ; that out of such vast treasures of learning and thought so small a portion only have I been able to gather up. Better thus perhaps than entire neglect and forgetfulness ; and in this thought lies my chief consolation and apology for my work.

My immediate aim in compiling these courses of sermons will be attained if these books direct the attention of any one to those all but forgotten sources of theological learning whence I have derived the material for their compilation ;

if in their own limited range of influence they may counteract to any degree a prevailing evil in the preaching of the day, by furnishing some examples of the pulpit teaching in "the Ages of Faith;" if a single reader gains one half the profit in his reading that I have gained in the writing; and lastly and chiefly, if in the humblest degree they tend to the greater glory of God, and to the edification of that branch of the Catholic Church in which I minister.

J. M. A.

NOTICES OF THE AUTHORS
OF THE
SERMONS WHICH ARE CONTAINED
IN THIS VOLUME.

A.—WILLIAM ALVERNUS (A.D. 1230),

WAS a Doctor of Theology and Philosophy, one of the most learned men of his day; he was Bishop of Paris from A.D. 1228 to A.D. 1249. Trithemius says that he was "a man learned in the Divine Scriptures a learned and devout master, he made his memory immortal." His collected sermons, three hundred and thirty-five in number, were published at Munich, in 1641, in a small quarto volume. This collection embraces—I., one hundred and six sermons upon the Epistles; II., one hundred and thirty-five sermons upon the Gospels for every Sunday in the year; and III., ninety-four sermons "De Sanctis."

The great charm of Alvernus lies in his clear and natural dissections of the subject upon which he is preaching; also in the great naturalness of his manner, combined as it is with feeling and loving counsel. One would hardly give him credit for his great learning, when judging him by his sermons, which are rather poetical and practical than Patristic or Scholastic. "Love" (p. 45) was a theme upon which he was eminently fitted to shine; and the spirit which breathes throughout this discourse is no unapt representation of his mind. "The Church Militant" (p. 252) illustrates how far Alvernus carried that system of division and subdivision which renders his course upon the Epistles of such eminent value. When we first open his pages, it seems as if we had long

known all, that Alvernus has to tell us. It is not until afterwards that the fact becomes patent, that it is his own beautifully simple way of telling great truths, and not our own foreknowledge that renders his sermons so charming to read. On the Septuagesima Epistle "To run," an exquisite little sermon is founded upon the four simple heads—to run (1) freed from (α) the fetters of sin, (β) the burden of temporal cares, and (γ) the garments of fleshly desire; (2) quickly; (3) in a straight course; (4) perseveringly. Some of the best sermons of Alvernus are contained in four hundred words, and so they form an excellent Promptuarium for the extempore preacher. The want of anecdote in Alvernus is atoned for by many apposite quotations from Ovid, Seneca, Cicero, and the best Latin writers, which are introduced without pedantry, and fall into their proper place with a natural grace. The holy Christian tone which pervades every sermon is beyond all praise. Alvernus was a gentle-minded prelate who looked upon the bright side of things, and sought to induce others, for their own gain, to follow his example.

B.—JOSEPH DE BARZIA (A.D. 1700),

Was Bishop of Cadiz, and a most eloquent preacher. The sermons upon which the great reputation of De Barzia rests are contained in two folio volumes, which were published at Augsburg, A.D. 1727, and edited by that noted sermon writer Joseph Ignatius Claus. The book is called "*Manductio ad Excitorem Christianum*," or "*Sermones Missionales*." It contains "*In Dominicali*," one hundred and fifty-four sermons, being three for every Sunday and for Good Friday, and one for Holy Thursday; and "*in Festivali*" seventy-eight sermons, giving also three for each Festival. These two hundred and thirty-two sermons, are named "*conceptûs*" and justly so, for each sermon is indeed a noble "*conception*" or thought upon the special subject in hand, treated with great clearness, earnestness, and brevity. The sermons rarely exceed in length one thousand words, being only, in some cases, one-ninth the length of those of Paoletti. They are also very simple in

structure, consisting of an Introduction, a Proposition, the Confirmation, and an Epilogue, or Exhortation. That De Barzia was a preacher of great power and earnestness the sermons entitled "The Person of Jesus Christ" (p. 96), "Contrition" (p. 209), "The Fewness of the Saved" (p. 230), and "Perseverance" (p. 306), will fully prove. It will be noticed also that he uses Holy Scripture with great reverence and caution, never quoting more than he absolutely requires, but bringing home to the conscience, with almost irresistible force, the portions and narratives which he employs. S. Thomas thrusting his hand into the side of our Blessed Lord is an example in point (p. 307). The short sermons of Barzia are so full of nerve, energy, and fire, that they cannot fail to arrest the attention and move the heart. It is because he is so eminently sympathetic and real that four of his sermons appear in this book, whilst only one or two sermons of the other preachers are given. The great defect of Barzia is that he seems to delight in representing the dark rather than the bright side both of the Gospel and of human nature, standing in this respect in marked contrast with Alvernus. On Easter Day we should naturally look for something cheerful and hopeful in the teaching from the pulpit: but he preaches upon "The Resurrection of the Body, as terrible to the wicked and glorious to the Penitent;" the whole sermon is melancholy in the extreme, the second part of his subject being comprised in less than two hundred words. The third "Conceptus" for the same great Festival is devoid even of this passing ray of joy, its subject being "The dreadful effects of Sin," which draw men into a relapse, unless they are carefully guarded against. The good bishop is much more at home in Lent than he is at Easter. We fare somewhat better on Ascension Day, since "The ineffable glory of the heavenly blessedness," forms the subject of two of the sermons; but even then Barzia gets back into his old vein of terrible persuasion, and he gives us a "Conception" "Upon the probation and disquisition of works, which will render us worthy to ascend with Christ into heaven." With all his great talents and high literary merit, it is evident that if De Barzia may have had "peace in believing," he certainly

could boast of very little "joy" in his faith. It is the intensely practical tone of his sermons which had caused Barzia to be ranked amongst the first of preachers.

G.B.—GABRIEL BIEL (A.D. 1480).

Of the facts of Biel's life very little is known beyond that he was a native of Spiers, Vicar of S. Martins Mainz, a Doctor of Theology and Professor of Tubingen, and that he died A.D. 1495. He was an indefatigable sermon writer and a laborious commentator upon Peter Lombard and his sentences. Of his many volumes of Sermons I possess only one, which is a highly abbreviated black letter quarto, bearing neither any date, nor colophon, which is entitled "*Sermones Gabrielis de Festivitatibus Christi*," and which contains forty-two of his Festival Sermons, from which "*The Fruits of the Ascension*," (p. 170) is taken, and which is quite representative of the other sermons of Gabriel Biel, which are solid, sound, and practical; containing not a trace of mysticism, and free altogether from scholastic subtleties. His entire sermons printed in a somewhat readable type, would amply repay a careful study. S. Leo is the author whom Biel most affects; and SS. Bernard and Gregory the Great are also much used by him; there are no less than five quotations from S. Leo in the Ascension Day Sermon. Biel was doubtless a most profitable and instructive preacher, but he cannot escape the charge of being somewhat heavy. He was a patient and industrious writer, certainly devoid of all brilliancy of thought; in him assuredly the creative faculty was either dead, or in a life-long state of torpor. Gabriel Biel is a standing example that the profound study of scholastic theology, does not develope the speculative faculties, unless in highly gifted minds. Gabriel Biel lacked the power to quicken his scholasticism into life.

C.—JUDOC CLICHTOVE (A.D. 1530).

He was born at Nieuport, in Flanders, studied at Paris, graduated a Doctor of the Sorbonne, and afterwards became a Professor of Theology. His preaching talent joined with his

exemplary life, obtained for him a great reputation. He was the first of the doctors who wrote against Luther, without bitterness but with great learning; his critical knowledge of the ancient languages was not deep, but he was profoundly learned in Holy Scripture and the Fathers. Erasmus called him "*Uberimus rerum optimarum fons.*" His style is superior to most of the Ecclesiastical writers of his day. He died as Doctor of Theology and Canon of Chartres, September 22, A.D. 1543. The Sermons of Clichtove were collected into a folio volume which was published at Cologne, A.D. 1550, seven years after his death, by Louis Lasselie, a disciple of the great doctor. This book contains one hundred and twelve sermons "*De Tempore*" upon the Sunday's Gospels for the year; seventy-seven sermons "*De Sanctis*;" and fifty-five Special Sermons upon the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Sacraments; making a total of two hundred and fifty-four Sermons. As I have remarked elsewhere, the matter of Clichtove is by no means original; nor does he shine in the arrangement and adaptation of his borrowed matter. The construction of his sermons is apparently very simple, consisting of an introduction, a first and second part, and generally three minor subdivisions in each, but this apparent simplicity quickly disappears when a sermon is thoroughly studied; it is then found to contain a series of facts or propositions, none of which are worked up into any very definite form, nor is a leading idea to be found in the majority of his sermons. The merit of Clichtove as a sermon writer is the amount of matter which he collects under one head, and from which clearer and more logical minds than his own can weave a definite course of instruction. "*The Presentation of the Lord*" (p. 122) shows off Clichtove to his best advantage; the first and second parts of this sermon being in the original "*nonnulla sacra mysteria in hac celebritate peracta,*" and "*tria potissimum sunt necessaria ut ad templum cordis nostri veniat Deus.*" These Sermons of Clichtove are so full of learning that it would not be lost labour to re-arrange and methodise his material, that it might be worked up for use at the present day. I suspect that these sermons are but notes, the arrangement of which had not fallen into very critical hands.

J. C.—JOSEPH IGNATIUS CLAUS (A.D. 1730).

A most celebrated preacher of the eighteenth century. One of his works, which is contained in four folio volumes, is entitled "*Spicelegium-Catechetico-Concionatorium*," and the other, "*Spicelegium Sacro-Profanum*," is a much larger one. Several editions of these voluminous collections of sermons were published at Ausburg between A.D. 1735 and 1776. Each volume contains about eighty sermons, so that the entire collection amounts to nearly nine hundred. In two sermons, "*The Law of Forgiveness*" (p. 219), and "*The Value of the Soul*" (p. 14), although they are abridged and re-arranged, are no unfair examples of the character of the preaching of Claus. The plan of their construction is as follows: An Introduction, a Proposition, and the Confirmation, in three heads; the whole sermon being divided into sections, the last of which is called the "*Epilogue*." The statement on the title-page is quite true, that these sermons are gleaned from "the best writers, the various metaphors of Holy Scripture, the sayings of the holy Fathers, and industriously enriched with doctrines, morals, similitudes, and well-selected histories;" but for all this, there is a certain something about them that strikes one as being cold in tone and artificial in expression. Claus lived at a period when heartfelt religion was at its very lowest ebb, and the spirit of the age is reflected in his well-intentioned, learned, and most industrious labours. His sermon on the fifth clause of the Lord's Prayer will quite explain my meaning. The "*Prologue*" states: Hunger is a great evil, which God sometimes permits. The "*Proposition*" is That we ought to cry to heaven for our daily bread. The "*Confirmation*" embraces: I. The fall of man, the curse upon the ground from his sin. II. Bread alone is asked for, as opposing all gluttony. III. On the part of God, His goodness and mercy will not fail. Not a word of the higher and spiritual meaning of this "bread" is to be met with in the entire sermon, which is all true and good as far as it goes; but it leaves at the same time something wanting upon which it does not touch. There is not a discourse by this valuable sermon-writer over which one does not

sigh for the "lost idea." All that extensive reading, joined to a fair amount of intellectual ability and good sound sense, can do towards the making of a sermon, has been done by Claus; but beyond this range he does not soar. Some of the appeals of Claus to the conscience are striking and effective, and his sermons might be capable of great things were a new spirit infused into them. They want "unction."

E.—ESCOBAR DE MENDOZA (A.D. 1640),

Was a Spanish Jesuit, and a noted Casuist and Preacher. He was preacher at the Royal College of Salamanca, and died A.D. 1669. His greatest work, upon the Holy Gospels, consists of twelve folio volumes of closely printed double columns; the first of which was published at Lyons A.D. 1642, and it furnishes a series of sermons upon almost every word of the four Evangelists. He calls this stupendous compendium of theological research and learning "*Lignum Vitæ*." Six volumes contain the "*Evangelia de Sanctis*," and the remaining six the "*Evangelia de Tempore*," the six fruits or volumes of which are the miracles, persecutions, conversations, discourses, prophecies, and parables of our Blessed Lord. Each volume is again divided into twelve sections, and these are cut into "*Moral Panegyrics*" and "*Observations*;" the result being that this large book is most easy of reference, and that its charming arrangement displays its vast and varied stores to the best possible advantage. The fourth volume, which was published in 1648, treats of the lives of the Apostles; and the fourth book of that volume, which contains ninety-five pages, is devoted to SS. Philip and James, and is divided into three parts, the first of which is common to both the Saints; the second treats especially of S. Philip, and the third of S. James.

The first section upon "*The Heavenly Mansions*" is explained in three chapters, and is there applied to SS. Philip and James, in a series of observations, each of which forms a sermon. The second section embraces "*The Life and End of Jesus*," the literal commentary being broken up into four chapters, and then likewise applied to the Saints in six sermons

or "Observations." It is the second of these observations, "*Quia sive laborum regiâ viâ haud cœlum iniri potest*," that furnishes the sermon, "The highway of the Cross" (p. 162). The third section treats of "The greater works of the believing," and affords three other Observations or sermons. Escobar gives in all thirty-two sermons for this festival, some containing as many as eight well-marked divisions, and all very rich in the spiritual meanings of Holy Scripture. This grand work of Escobar, "*The Evangelia Sanctorum*," might well be called the preaching life of our Blessed Lord and His Apostles and Saints; taken as a whole, it is one of the grandest books that have ever been written. In working up the "Observations" of the "*Lignum Vitæ*" into sermons, there is a wide scope for the exercise of the preacher's reading and ability; they quicken the feelings and stimulate the mind. Escobar gives the grass which has to be cut down and made into hay in order to be used as healthful provender; and in this case the delight of the haymaking is assured from the richness in quality and the abundance in quantity which is furnished ready to hand. The "*Lignum Vitæ*" can be regarded as an enormous repository of sermons in embryo, of a high and spiritual type: to any Priest it would be an invaluable "*Vade mecum*."

F.—MATTHIAS FABER (A.D. 1620),

Was born at Neumarkt, A.D. 1586, and died at Tyrnau in 1653. When fifty-one years of age he entered the Society of Jesus. His Collection of Sermons is called "*Concionum Opus Tripartitum*," which has been reprinted at Naples in 1860, in three volumes quarto. To the former work another collection of sermons is added which is called the "*Auctuarium*" and fills two more volumes of the Naples edition, thus making five in all. The two collections contain one thousand and ninety-six sermons, exclusive of thirty-seven funeral and thirty marriage sermons, which bring the total number of Faber's sermons up to one thousand one hundred and sixty-three. In the Naples edition the arrangement of the printing is so good, that a sermon can be read off almost at a glance, and the various

indices and tables render the book most convenient for reference. The "Auctuarium" only contains half the number of sermons for the several Sundays and Festivals which are given in the "Opus tripartitum," and is as a whole inferior to the larger and earlier collection. His sermons vary greatly as to length; for instance, the first sermon for the Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany contains one thousand seven hundred and sixty words, whilst the third for the same Sunday has as many as four thousand and eighty-eight words; and their style and treatment of the subject are subject to a corresponding variation—some being absolutely sublime, whilst others are the driest of dry morality, or are nearly filled with secular matter. Faber is so essentially modern in tone, though happily not so in his learning, that many of the sermons could be preached, as they were left by him more than two hundred years since. "The Lessons" and the "Mysteries" which form the last two sermons upon every Gospel, are rich in Scriptural exegesis, and published alone would make a most useful book, either for expository preaching or for catechetical instruction. With Faber's fifteen and more sermons upon the Gospels for every Sunday and Festival, a man might fairly consider himself to be stocked with sermons for a lifetime. To appreciate the value of his collection of sermons they must be gone over year by year, and as they become more and more known, their vast and varied treasures become more apparent. Yet in Faber is noticeable—though not to the same extent, the coldness which detracts from the value of Claus; a want of feeling which is evidently the fault of his age and not of the man. In fact it is true of Claus and Faber both, that they were rather great sermon writers than great preachers whose sermons were published after delivery. There is the widest possible distinction between a sermon which is written for publication, and one that is preached *con amore* first, and written afterwards. All the matter in Faber is well digested and appropriately arranged; the republication of such an extensive work speaks for itself.

V. F.—S. VINCENT FERRER (A.D. 1400).

This great master of the spiritual life, and energetic advocate for the unity of the Church, was born at Valence in Spain, A.D. 1346, was created a Doctor of Theology in 1383; was for some years the Confessor and defender of Benedict XIII.; attached himself to the Council of Constance, 1418, and died at Vannes in Brittany, April 5, 1419. His Treatises "On the Spiritual Life," "The End of the World," and "The Two Advents of Antichrist," can even now be studied with delight and profit. His sermons are a vast magazine of holy thoughts: they may be read and re-read, and each time with increased profit and deepened feeling and conviction. The holiness of this man's life impresses itself in a wonderful way upon every line that he wrote, so that we feel, whilst we are reading him, that we are holding converse with a man of God. His works are contained in a goodly folio, edited by Erhard, and published at Ausburg, A.D. 1729. The number of sermons are—in the "Dominicale," two hundred and sixteen; in the "Festivale," ninety-one; in the "Quadragesimale," sixty-five; in the "Commune," twenty-six. The sermons are rather long, but not intricate in their construction, so that any number of heads can be eliminated should the treatment of the subject be deemed too excursive. S. Vincent Ferrer was, as a preacher, spiritual, rather than intellectual; thoughtful rather than learned; experimental rather than descriptive. He tells you all things ever you did or even thought of. Any one labouring amidst a middle-class and artisan population would find the possession of these three hundred and ninety-eight sermons a very great boon.

In his "Dominicale" S. Vincent Ferrer gives four, five, and sometimes more sermons for each Sunday; generally one or two upon the Epistle. For the first Sunday in Advent there are no less than twelve sermons. In style, S. Vincent Ferrer is unaffected and simple; he very rarely relates an anecdote, or quotes any classical author; there is nothing at all archaic about him; he is decidedly modern both in thought and expression. His general tone can be discerned from the sermons entitled

“A Good Man” (p. 189), and “The Great Reward” (p. 264), in the present volume; but I consider that he shines far more highly in his “Dominicale” than he does in his “Festivele.” “Man’s Three Witnesses,”—Conscience, the Good and Evil Angels, and Jesus Christ Himself,—is a masterly exposition of the life and nature of man; it forms the third sermon for the sixth Sunday after Easter. The theology and the metaphysics of S. Vincent Ferrer are worthy of all admiration. On the third Sunday after Trinity, in his third sermon, he preaches upon “The fourfold Title and Office of Christ,” and He is set forth as (1) the Heavenly Master; (2) the Spiritual Physician; (3) the Shepherd of the human race; (4) the Lord of the Universe. If we desired to be critical we might say that S. Vincent Ferrer is a little too minute in his analysis of points of doctrine as well as of duties; that he assumes on the part of his hearers a total ignorance even of the commonest things. Yet after all, if this be a defect, it is surely erring on the safe side—on the one which is calculated to do the most good. Plain, practical earnestness is the salient feature in the sermons of S. Vincent Ferrer.

H.—HENRY HARPIUS (A.D. 1460).

He was a Fleming, of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance; one of the great founders of mystical and ascetic theology; he died at Mechlin, A.D. 1478. His three books, “The Epithalamium,” “The Golden Directory of the Contemplative Life,” and “Eden; or, the Terrestrial Paradise of Contemplation,” were published at Cologne, A.D. 1538. The sermons of Harpius were printed at Hagenau in 1509, with a discourse upon “The Three Parts of Repentance,” and another upon “The Threefold Advent of Jesus Christ.” This volume, which has never been reprinted, is exceedingly rare. It is a small black-letter quarto, full of curious contractions, and it contains one hundred and ninety-seven sermons; namely, one hundred and five, “De Tempore;” fifty-nine, “De Sanctis;” twenty-three Lenten sermons on Repentance; and twenty sermons upon “The Threefold Advent of the Lord;” all of

which are distinguished for their sober sense and their well-digested treatment of the subject in hand. Harpius was content to make one thought the basis of each sermon, and to illustrate it in three or four points. Although he is looked upon as one of the earliest exponents of mystical theology at the period of its revival, his sermons must be reckoned to be scholastic rather than mystical. S. Thomas Aquinas is his great authority upon all points connected with morals and metaphysics, and he is quoted by him as S. Thomas or as "The Holy Doctor," and not by his more usual title of "Angelic." Peter Lombard figures continually in his pages as "The Master of the Sentences," or simply as "the Master;" whilst SS. Augustine, Gregory, and Bernard, supply him with many of his spiritual reflections. The manner in which Harpius works up his matter is worthy of all praise: it is most neatly dovetailed into the subject in hand, so that his sermon, as it regards symmetry of proportion, becomes very nearly perfect. Harpius excels in that very point in which the sermons of Alvernus, as they have come down to us, fail. A good notion of the real value of his sermons can be gathered from the two sermons in the present book, "The Three who Shine" (p. 30), and "The Lord's Dwelling" (p. 295), the latter being, in the editor's opinion, both in point of artistic construction and sublimity of thought, the finest sermon in the present series. A thousand valuable sermons might with ease be formed out of this one black-letter quarto, each one rich in those eternal truths which remain ever fresh as they pass downwards from age to age.

N.—NICHOLAS DE NYS (A.D. 1490),

Was one of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance, of Rouen, and a very celebrated preacher of his time. His sermons were beautifully printed in black-letter by Francois Regnault of Paris, in a small volume edited by Barbier, who speaks of them as being "priceless and most useful for all conditions of men." Regnault's small edition contains one hundred and ninety-two Sunday, and seventy-seven Festival sermons.

Perhaps there is not one of these four hundred and sixty-nine sermons, that does not contain an idea worthy of record. De Nys is very liberal in his supply, giving as many as eight sermons for one Sunday, or for one of the leading Festivals. He furnishes thirteen sermons for the Feast of the Assumption. De Nys formed all his discourses upon a stereotyped plan, opening with a short introduction, and then dividing his subject into three articles. As a rule the same text is taken for all the sermons for the same day, and when this is not the case the numbers cease, and he says, "another subject follows." De Nys was a purely scholastic preacher, and therefore his matter is somewhat dryly put together; but any one taking the trouble to unravel the thread of his sermons, will find themselves to be richly rewarded for their pains; for the ingenuity shown in their construction is marvellous. The introduction in which three heads is deduced from the text, is, strange to say, only indirectly alluded to in the three following Articles, the first of which is devoted to the examination of some abstract theological proposition. From these introductions only, a series of valuable sermons could be produced. The second article is also, as a rule, complete in itself, whilst the third is generally practical or hortatory. In "The Fruits of Suffering" (p. 59) the arrangement of De Nys has been departed from as being unsuitable for modern use; his "First Article" sifts the question as to "Whether the Innocents before the Throne of God see the Divine Essence," which knotty point is discussed in his first sermon for "All Saints' Day;" and then he kindly tells us that if we wish to raise any other questions, we shall find them discussed in the other sermons for the same festival. The three divisions of the "Second Article" forms the chief part of the sermon which is given in our pages. The fulness of matter in this little black-letter tome can be imagined from the fact that it would be easy to construct some two thousand sermons from the divisions and subjects of inquiry that it contains. Even the special sermons, "De Sanctis," are quite able to be applied to a general subject. There are no less than thirteen sermons for S. Francis upon the words, "A New Creature" (Gal. vi. 15). One ser-

mon begins: A new creature signifies a new heart. "A new heart also will I give you" (Ezek. xxxvi. 1), which shows—firstly, the liberality of the Divine promise. "God giveth to all men liberally" (S. James i. 5); secondly, the necessity of our reception of this gift: "All nations before Him are as nothing" (Isai. xl. 17). Thirdly, the benefit of this gift: "Put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge" (Coloss. iii. 10). In the other sermons this "new creature" is taken for "the New Life," the "New Conversation," the "New Yoke of Jesus Christ," the "New Disposition," the "New Refreshment," and the like. As judged of by this book alone, De Nys must assuredly be accounted a "Great Preacher," as well as a profoundly learned man.

P.—AUGUSTINE PAOLETTI (A.D. 1630),

Was a monk of the Order of S. Augustine, and Prior of the Province of Sienna, the most noted preacher of his day. A quarto volume, containing ninety-three of his sermons, edited in Latin by Gratian, was published at Cologne, A.D. 1664. Each of the three parts into which this volume is divided is most copiously enriched with indices and tables of reference of all kinds, so that the book is very complete. The tables of the authors quoted by Paoletti exhibit the wide range of his reading and erudition. In the first part, which contains twenty-four sermons, from Advent to Quinquagesima, the list of authors embraces five hundred and thirty-six names, among whom some are of extremely rare occurrence. Paoletti seemed to place almost every one under contribution, for his list includes Kepler, Lucian, and Virgil, as well as Dionysius the Carthusian, Lanspergius, and Barradius; he was intellectually omnivorous to an extraordinary degree. As might be expected from such an extensive reader, the sermons of Paoletti are both heavy and unmethodical, but rich in thought and illustration to an extent almost inconceivable. They are also very long: the sermons in this volume, "The Beginning of the End" (p. 71), and "Procrastination" (p. 241), are but imperfect and re-arranged analyses of discourses that contain some nine thou-

sand words. The plan upon which Paoletti formed his sermons was to divide the whole sermon into sections, each containing about three hundred words. As many as nineteen of these sections are to be found in some sermons. They are disposed of as follows : the first three or four illustrate the argument for the most part from pagan authorities ; ten or twelve more form the first part of the sermon, and the remainder are grouped into the second part. This division into sections renders the matter easy of attainment, and allows of the sermons being more clearly and logically arranged than they were by himself, without very much trouble. In their original form the sermons of Paoletti are of little use for our present pulpit ; but the very wide range of his reading renders them an almost inexhaustible mine, whence the most varied treasures can be procured. As an intellectual treat, there are few that can surpass the quiet perusal of one of Paoletti's discourses, pencil in hand, noting down the more remarkable points and his curious quotations. Judging from the Latin version, there could have been, from the very numerous citations, but few graces of style or flights of oratory in the original Italian. The charm of Paoletti lies in his matter rather than in his manner ; and in his vivid and graphic illustrations, which are as jewels lighting up the oration ever and anon until it sparkles with brightness. Paoletti must be regarded not by any means as a model preacher ; but his sermons are to be looked upon as a certain quarry from which the material can be obtained for an erection in better proportions and of grander design than he was himself able to construct.

B. S.—BERNARDIN OF SIENNA (A.D. 1410).

S. Bernardin was born at Massa-Carrera, A.D. 1383, of noble parents. He studied philosophy, and entered the confraternity of The Hospital at Sienna, and was highly distinguished for his courage and charity during the plague that ravaged that city in 1400. In 1402 he assumed the habit of S. Francis, and founded nearly three hundred monasteries. His humility caused him to refuse the bishoprics of Sienna, of Ferrara, and of Urbin. He died in Aquita in 1444, and he was canonized six

years after his death by Nicholas V. The best edition of his works is that edited by De La Haye, and published at Venice A.D. 1745, and consists of five folio volumes bound into four. The sermons of S. Bernardin exercised a very large influence during the century which succeeded his death; but are, in their original condition, not well adapted for modern use. They are terse and dry to a degree that can only be estimated by their perusal. Each sermon is divided into three articles, and each article into three chapters. In fact they are highly laboured and artificial compositions; and they are not really sermons at all, in our sense of the word, but are short and well-digested treatises upon the several topics of which they treat. A large number of these sermo-tractates relate to questions of morals, which are now happily all but obsolete. There are only thirteen sermons, "De Tempore," by S. Bernardin; the rest are for the most part successive series of Quaresimales or Lenten sermons. The five volumes of De La Haye only contain three hundred and twenty-one sermons. As a theological compendium, the writings of S. Bernardin are of infinite value. His "Quadragesimale Seraphim," which contains forty-eight sermons upon Love, is in itself a perfect storehouse of experimental religion. "The Forsaken World" (p. 108), gives an indication of S. Bernardin's method of treating a subject; it is, however, not much more than an analysis, whilst the "Session of Jesus Christ" (p. 289), is rather founded upon, than is a translation of our author. In spite of what are now by us counted to be defects, S. Bernardin of Sienna must be ranked amongst the first preachers of the Church; and Trithemius says of him that he was "*declamator omnium sui temporis celeberrimus.*"

L. V.—LAURENTIUS DE VILLAVINCENTIO
(A.D. 1650),

Was born in Xeres in Andalusia, but spent the larger portion of his life in Spain. He became a Doctor of Divinity of the Faculty of Louvain in 1658. He was a monk of the Augustinian Order. Soon after taking his doctor's degree he was called to the Court and appointed preacher to Philip II. of

Spain. He died A.D. 1680. Villavincenzio devoted his life to preaching with great earnestness and success. He was the author of three works, entitled "De Formandis Sacris Conscionibus;" also of two volumes of sermons; which were printed at Paris in 1577. The sermon, "The Words of Jesus Christ" (p. 152), is taken from a small volume of Festival sermons upon the Gospels and Epistles, which was published by Plantin of Antwerp, A.D. 1569. The text of the Gospel or the Epistle is given in full; a running practical commentary is followed by an "Epilogue," in which the chief points of the teaching are arranged in well-digested heads. The little work is carefully and usefully compiled and arranged, and it forms a "promptuarium" for short extempore sermons, which is by no means to be despised, albeit nothing either very striking or profound is to be found in it. As a rule, sermons "IN Evangelia et Epistolas" are hardly more than mere commentaries upon Holy Scripture, and are miserably disappointing to those who value in a sermon one leading thought which is well worked out. Laurentius de Villavincenzio was a great preacher in his day, and as such, one of his sermons deservedly finds a place in the present book.

V.—JACOBUS DE VORAGINE (A.D. 1290).

General of the Dominican Order, Author of "The Golden Legend," Archbishop of Genoa. He is said to have known almost all S. Augustine by heart. He furnishes us with two hundred and fifty-nine "*Sermones Aurei* in Dominicas et Quadragesimam;" with three hundred and three sermons "De Festis Sanctorum;" and also with one hundred and fifty-six sermons "De Laudibus Deiparæ Virginis." Voragine gives three sermons upon the Gospel for every Sunday in the year, but he varies the number of his sermons for the Festivals. For instance he gives nine for Christmas Day; six for the Epiphany; five for the Circumcision; seven for S. Michael and All Angels; eight for All Souls' Day. There is not one of these seven hundred and eighteen sermons without value; and even the discourses upon the Blessed Virgin are so full of general matter, that they can be used without any reference to Her who was

especially in the author's mind. The general plan of Voragine was to break up his subject into three or four primary divisions, and to subdivide these likewise into three or four heads. Very often one division with its three heads is all sufficient for a modern sermon. Every proposition is copiously illustrated from Holy Scripture, and the writings of SS. Augustine and Bernard are perpetually being cited. The style of Voragine is pure, concise, and lucid to an eminent degree; and his matter is sound and practical, with an element of spirituality underlying it which is hardly apparent upon the surface. The line of his sermons is decidedly intellectual, and every one bears the impress of being the production of a highly educated and accomplished mind. The examples from him in the present book, are "The Star of Grace" (p. 83), "The Man of God" (p. 203), and "The Great Legation" (p. 141). A truly typical sermon in Voragine's best manner is his second sermon for First Sunday in Lent, "The Four Spirits recorded in the Gospel." The divine, the human, the evil, and the angelic. Whilst discoursing on the human Spirit of our Blessed Lord, he notes that He suffered hunger in four ways, and then He had for food (1) stones or hard hearts; (2) leaves, words without works; (3) vinegar and myrrh, good works done in deadly sin; (4) when He hungered for our salvation. The best edition of the works of Voragine, and the one from which the present translations have been made, was published at Augsburg, A.D. 1760, in three folio volumes, which are bound in two. In many of these old sermon writers, the heads or divisions which they provide for us is their chief use and excellency. This is eminently the case with De Nys, and is partially so both with Voragine and Alvernus; they give us a noble skeleton, and our own thought and feeling must clothe it and endow it with life. The great strength of Voragine lies in the apt quotations and illustrations with which he supports his every division and proposition, leaving still a wide scope for the exercise of our own powers, and yet just directing them sufficiently to save us from spoiling the goodly fabric which he would have us erect. These seven hundred and eighteen sermons of Voragine are a noble heritage which he has left for the Church's spiritual gain and profit.

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THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD.

SERMON I.

CHRISTMAS JOY.

“Behold, I bring you tidings of great joy.”—*S. Luke ii. 10.*

CHRISTMAS DAY is a Festival of so great joy, that upon it, more than upon any other festival, the great Fathers of the Church were wont to begin their sermons with a call to joy and gladness. Hear an Augustine: “Let us rejoice, brethren, let the people be glad and exult;” a Leo: “Our Saviour, dearly beloved, was born to-day; let us rejoice, for where the birthday of life is being kept, it is not fitting that a place should be found for sadness;” a Maximus: “Most justly, brethren, the whole world everywhere arouses itself to universal joy by the festival of this day, since that Judge and Redeemer of the universe Who had been promised for ages was to-day born.” Surely the world ought to rejoice, for the heavenly voice, speaking to us by an angel, said, “I bring you

tidings of great joy." The angels themselves, too, set us an example of rejoicing by singing their Christmas hymn, "Glory to God in the highest," on this our festival. They sing, "For they behold the Heavenly Jerusalem to be builded up of all nations ; for which ineffable work of divine loving-kindness how greatly ought the humility of man to rejoice, when so great sublimity of angels is glad." (S. Leo.) Let not any one say that this joy is obsolete, or that the glad tidings were alone for the shepherds' ears, for the angel adds, "to all people," and if so, then these tidings belong of a surety to ourselves : and throughout all the successive ages of the world there must be a public, universal, and perpetual joy. Let us now inquire briefly upon what this special joy is founded. And in the angelic message we find a full answer to our question—"Unto you is born, this day, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." (S. Luke ii. 11.)

I. *A Saviour is born to-day.*—The Saviour Who was born into the world to-day, was not an ordinary, but a perfect Saviour, since He not only delivers us from partial, but also from the truest and severest of evils. Amongst men, many have obtained the title of Saviour ; such as the judges who at successive periods de-

livered the Israelites out of the hands of their enemies; and also during the distress of Jehoahaz, "the Lord gave Israel a saviour." (2 Kings xiii. 8.) Likewise, also, amongst the Romans, they who delivered the commonwealth from any great danger or enemy were called the Fathers of the country. With the Greeks it was customary to call their physicians saviours—such as Æsculapius and Hercules; but these, although they delivered only some particular city or nation from dangers that were special, and, comparatively speaking, small, were nevertheless held in great honour, and were often included amongst the national gods. Now the Saviour Who is born to-day was to deliver, not one nation only, nor from a merely temporal ill, but to liberate the whole world from those eternal perils which are alone worthy of the name of dangers. If in olden times then, a city or people greatly rejoiced when a powerful leader arose to be the liberator of his people, how much rather ought we Christians to rejoice, since we have a Saviour born to-day Who will free us not merely from the servitude or taxation of a mortal tyrant, but from the bondage of Satan, and Who will restore to us our pristine liberty, our primeval integrity, our hope, our salvation, and our eternal coun-

try? The liberation which Judith effected from the tyranny of Holofernes was celebrated by a three months' rejoicing, but our rejoicing should be taken up by the successive races of men, and continued until the end of the world; it should be co-extensive with the deliverance which it commemorates; for a Saviour is born to-day.

II. *A Christ is born to-day.*—Christ the Messiah, the Anointed of the Lord, He Who had been so very long time desired, and prayed for by so many vows; He from Whom the Jews looked for every happiness and a restoration into the land which flows with milk and honey; He from Whom we Christians look for a leading into that heavenly country abounding in every blessing, which when it was closed, He first opened to us. This is that land formerly promised to the Jews, flowing with milk and honey more truly than did Palestine, since it abounds, and more than abounds, in every pleasure. It would indeed be a great happiness if we knew that some one was at this moment present with us who had the power to place us in a paradise. Even now is Jesus Christ present Who is both able and willing to place us, not in any earthly but in the heavenly paradise, the Paradise of God. For Jesus

Christ opened to us that way to paradise by repentance, which had been closed to us through sin. Hence His Forerunner began to preach: "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (S. Matt. iii. 2): as if he said, "He is present Who has the keys of heaven, and in a short time He will open it, meanwhile approach it by repentance; it is a golden gate that I have opened." This is that "acceptable year of the Lord" (S. Luke vi. 19), which our Blessed Lord applied to Himself when preaching in the synagogue of Nazareth, He cited the words of the Prophet Isaiah.

It is recorded that during the earlier part of his life, Maximilian, afterwards the first emperor of that name, in desperation sought refuge from the enemy in a steep and almost inaccessible cave, and gave himself up for lost. What must have been his joy when he beheld a young man creeping towards him, who said, "Be of good heart, O prince, one who can guard you, both lives and is present?" As the sun shines all the brighter when it emerges from the clouds, so serenity returned to the heart of the prince. And we also, ever and anon, spiritually wander in some such place as Maximilian took refuge in, nor does the way to our

heavenly country seem open to us. Behold He lives and is present to-day, Who is able both to defend us and to restore us to our lost country; He will go before us, that He may remove the stones, and clear the way for us, just as the young man did for the future emperor. Who, therefore, on this day does not take fresh courage and is not wholly filled with joy? "Let us rejoice in the Lord, dearly beloved, and let us be joyful with a spiritual joy, for the day of our new redemption hath dawned, of our ancient reparation, of our eternal happiness." (S. Leo.) A Christ is born to-day.

III. *A Lord is born to-day.*—This Saviour and Christ is absolutely Lord and God; hence our ground of rejoicing. We are reconciled to God, Who has to-day entered into our own city, not as an armed soldier, but as a peace-maker, as the Captain of our salvation.

When King Ahasuerus held out his golden sceptre for any one to kiss, or even to touch, it was a sign of his favour and mercy. (Esth. iv. 11; v. 2.) God showed the same sign to-day, when He extended to us from heaven His golden rod that we should kiss it, which is His Only Begotten Son, a lasting token of His mercy and peace, having been bestowed upon us. Hence the command, "Kiss the Son, lest

He be angry, and ye perish from the way." (Ps. ii. 12.) Jacob adored, looking at the summit of this rod from afar (Heb. xi. 21), which we in the Holy Eucharist kiss at the present time.

This day further shows the great favour and honour the human race gained from God, who not only entered into its city, but also willed to dwell and make His habitation in it. If any earthly prince were to leave his usual place of abode, and take up his abode in some other town in his dominions, is there any doubt but that the inhabitants of that place would welcome him with all applause and joy. Every one would join in his welcome, and the signs of rejoicing would decorate all the public streets.

Our God and our Prince has this day entered into our city, that He might dwell in our midst; hence to-day nearly all the world is moved and filled with joy. The angels were singing praises to God; the heavens gave a new star of unwonted splendour to the wise men; there was peace on all sides; the vine of En-gedi put forth flowers. All creation was invigorated to-day, for they were revived by the coming of their Creator, and after a certain fashion were deified; as if they desired to

rouse the sluggish hearts of men to a worthy reception of Jesus Christ, with fitting love and gratitude. Our Lord has visited us to-day.

IV. *Jesus Christ was born for us to-day.*—Our Blessed Lord became Incarnate, and was born our brother, the elder brother of our race, to-day; hence we have a community of goods and inheritance with Him. We give to Him all that we received from Adam, our wretchedness, our mortality, and our sin, whilst He gives us all that He had from His Eternal Father, the riches of His glory. He was born an infant, meek, gentle, humble, and gracious, that we might learn to know Him and to love Him. He was born in fleshly substance, no longer hidden within the bosom of His Father and in the sanctuaries of heaven, nor under the veil of types, in order that we might know our God, speak with Him, hear Him, see Him, and touch Him. He was born that we might hold such familiar and sweet intercourse with Him as to find in Him every joy, even as a mother does, who holds her most dear child in her arms and kisses it. This was what the Magdalene and the holy Simeon did to our dear Lord. “Unto you is born;” for our sakes Jesus Christ was born to-day. He was born,

not for His own sake, not for that of the angels, but for our sakes, and for three reasons.

Firstly. For the exaltation of our lowly nature. For we note that from the moment of the Incarnation the holy angels were placed in a new relationship towards us; from that hour they confess themselves to be our fellow-servants, and are unwilling to be adored by us, as can be proved by the Revelation. To-day they become our mediators. "Because the King of heaven has taken upon Him the earth of our flesh, now that angelic height cannot any longer despise our infirmity." (S. Greg.) The evil angels are at length overcome and mocked by us whom they formerly treated in the same way.

Secondly. For our great profit and gain. For what good cannot happen to man, since for his sake God became Man? (S. Prosp.) It implies the granting of some great good, that God should have endured so much for man. His humiliation demands a mighty recompence. Let the great God be magnified by us little ones, whom that He might make great was Himself made little. He was born a child for us, neither for Himself nor for the angels. (S. Bern.)

Thirdly. Jesus Christ was born for us in order that all that He possesses, knows, and is able to do, may become ours ; and if we may say so with all reverence, He is wholly ours, as if He were a certain property ; all that He may gain or will possess is ours. Lastly, we are able in a sense to sell Him to God the Father, to gain our salvation and to pay our debt. The victors make a great rejoicing when a king or a leader is taken captive in war, for having taken him, it seems as if they had gained all ; for they obtain his spoils, his riches, his treasure ; they obtain the cause of war, or those advantages for the sake of which the war was undertaken ; they obtain his captives, whom they can easily redeem if they are willing to exchange them with the king ; they gain the father of his kingdom, which the king gladly offers in exchange for his own liberation.

Wherefore, O Christians, since to-day you possess God, how great a cause have you for joy ! Let Isaiah describe it : “ They joy before Thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.” (Isa. ix. 3.)

V. *To-day Jesus Christ is born.*—“ This day,” in which He is willing and able to save, should be indeed a day of universal gladness ; it is

the realization of a long expectancy; it is a glorious light shining upon the nations that had long walked in darkness.

Firstly. Jesus Christ is a Saviour to us now in the present time, whilst to the Fathers His salvation was a thing of the future. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises [of the possession of a heavenly kingdom], but having seen them afar off and saluted them" (Heb. xi. 13), as sailors salute the shore of their native land when they descry it from afar; or as the wolf in the fable, who ran round the well, burning with thirst to drink the water, whilst unable to drink any, yet frequently looked at it, so that he might be somewhat refreshed by its mere sight. This was just what the Fathers of old did. Listen to David, who was one of them, yearning for this water: "Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!" (2 Sam. xxiii. 15.) David in spirit looked longingly towards Jesus Christ, Who was hereafter to be in a stable at Bethlehem, beside the gate, of Whom he longed to drink as of water the sweetest and the most pure. That great thing which the Fathers so desired and beheld from afar, we can rejoice in being possessed of to-day.

Secondly. To-day Jesus Christ turned a night into day; I should rather say, into a perpetual day. It was night-time when the Saviour was born, and His birth was announced to the shepherds since they were "keeping watch over their flocks by night" (S. Luke ii. 8); yet the angels do not speak of this time as being night, but rather day, for "the night was far spent, the day was at hand," the day of grace, in which we can now clearly see how we ought to walk that we may be saved. This is conclusively pointed out by the fact that "the glory of the Lord shone round about" the shepherds. Isaiah prophesied of this day: "They that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined" (Isa. ix. 2), for "His going forth is prepared as the morning." (Hos. vi. 3.)

As the beasts of prey fly into their caverns when the day dawns, and man on the other hand goes "forth to his work and to his labour until the evening" (Ps. civ. 23), so ought Christians, the darkness of sins being put to flight, to be in earnest in their use of grace. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." (Rom. xiii. 12.)

Let your Christmas joy, then, be a holy thankful gladness for a mighty deliverance from sin and death, and for the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD.

SERMON II.



THE VALUE OF THE SOUL.

“The Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us.”—

S. John i. 14.

I. *The soul is not valued because its value is not known.*—Why was “the Word made Flesh?” The answer to this question will form the subject of our meditation upon this great festival of rejoicing, upon this commemoration of the birthday of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in the Flesh. There is an old story told of a very charitable, but also a poor and ignorant man, who lived in the island of Samos, who found in a fish which he had bought one day for his dinner a large pearl. He was much surprised at what he had discovered, but he did not know whether it was really a pearl or only a piece of glass, so he carried his treasure to several jewellers to try and learn what its nature and value really were. He was still

more astonished to find that, amongst these dealers in precious stones, a great diversity of opinion existed as to its value ; and it seemed that the price which they put upon it varied with their knowledge. The first jeweller to whom he carried it valued it at five florins ; but he took it to another, and he held it to be worth twenty ; a third said that he would willingly buy it at the price of a hundred ; and at last a fourth gave him four hundred florins for it, which he most gladly accepted. It is of no small moment, therefore, that all things should be well known, in order that they may be estimated at their true value ; for if a jewel the most rare and precious, happens to fall into the hands of an ignorant and inexperienced boor, it may be despised, but when it is placed before a skilful merchant it has a value assigned to it which is just and right, for its value is appreciated.

O Christian hearers, "The Word was made Flesh !" "this day is born a Saviour which is Christ the Lord" (S. Luke ii. 11), Who descended into this world of sin and sorrow, likening Himself "unto a merchant seeking goodly pearls." (S. Matt. xiii. 45.) Do you desire to learn what is the nature and the value of that pearl for the finding of which Jesus

Christ became Incarnate?" Then, listen, for that pearl is the human soul; a soul which from the beginning of the world even till now has not been sufficiently valued, for the dignity and price of its great worth. Think upon its past valuations for a moment. What was this soul valued at in Paradise? At a pitiful price, indeed; for Adam and Eve sold it for the sake of an apple. What was it valued at in the time of Joseph? At a somewhat higher rate; for an innocent young man was sold by his brethren for twenty pieces of silver. (Gen. xxxvii. 28.) What was the soul valued at in the time of David? The price has risen, but still it is lamentably below the mark; for he went to fight in that dire contest against Goliath of Gath, and exposed it to destruction, when he heard that to the man who killed him, "the king will enrich him with great riches, and will give him his daughter, and make his father's house free in Israel." (1 Sam. xvii. 25.) What was the soul's value in the time of the Maccabees? The price was higher still; for the seven sons of one mother, by the command of Antiochus, suffered the most dreadful torments, being maimed, flayed, and fried alive (2 Macc. vii.), rather than imperil their souls by breaking the commandments of God. So, indeed, by degrees

grew the appreciation of the value of the soul; but after all, it was but the estimation at the five, or the twenty, or the hundred florins: the Merchantman who alone knew its full value had not as yet come.

II. *The Incarnation taught men more clearly the value of the soul.*—But truly, O brethren, the inestimable value of this priceless gift of God was by no circumstance in the world's history so revealed, as it was by this joyful mystery which we commemorate to-day, whereby God, the Maker of all things, by taking our nature upon Him, became the buyer or the redeemer of our souls. What was the price that Jesus Christ paid for the redemption of that soul, which is more precious than the gold which perisheth though it be purified seven times in the fire? He gave all that even a God could give: He gave Himself! "By so great a price was our redemption procured, that man seemed to be able to prevail with God." (Eseb. Eniss.)

Does any one who is enrolled amongst the number of Christians dare to doubt that the Son of God became Incarnate, and descended upon earth for the salvation of our souls? If any one so rash should exist, I wish indeed to make his ears tingle, and earnestly to inculcate

upon him that clause in the Nicene Creed, which he repeats so often, "Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven." And I would also mention a pretty fancy of that great master of the spiritual life, S. Bernard, which is very curious in its way. The first thing that infants do when they are born is to cry; and the male children, he says, seem to sound the first letter A in their wailing, whilst the female infants articulate a sound which nearly resembles the letter E. S. Bernard sees in this fact (if it be one) a hidden meaning, which is somewhat quaint and far-fetched, but still worthy of a passing mention. The male infants, in their articulation of the letter A, seem to bewail with detestation the prevarication of Adam; it is as if they said, "Adam, Adam, what hast thou done?" Whilst the female infants condemn the curiosity of Eve, as if they said, "Eve, Eve, to how great misery hast thou reduced us?" Did the Son of God when an infant utter any tears and laments? Assuredly He did; but He had no cause to lament over the guilt of Adam, for He was not born in original sin, and yet He had another, a stronger and a bitterer reason why He should have cried from the manger with the strongest possible voice, seeing that His

desire was towards that human soul which He came to purify, to lift up from the lowest depths of misery and sin, and which He loved with so deep and burning a love. He cried then as an infant, that from His birth it might be seen how He entered into the spirit and suffering of that humanity which He had taken upon Himself; that there was in Him at the very beginning of His earthly life, a spirit which could sympathise with, and be touched with, a fellow feeling for our infirmity. He cried that He might completely identify Himself with that whole creation which "groaned and travailed in pain together," until that time when He came to make all things new. The infant's cry in the manger of Bethlehem was His first prayer offered up in his mediatorial office as the God-man Jesus Christ.

Whilst we are thinking and speaking of our dear Lord as an infant, the question may be asked with profit, why it was that when the Son of God had decreed to come in our nature and redeem our race, He did not descend upon this earth in a full-grown and perfect manhood? He had formed the adult body of Adam, He could likewise have so formed Himself, and thus He could have avoided all the inconveniences of infancy, and He could then have

commenced His mission and His preaching on the very first day of His advent in the flesh. Why did He take upon Himself all the weakness, helplessness, and weariness of infancy, and so slowly, step by step, ascend to manhood, increasing in wisdom and stature? Truly this infancy of our Lord Jesus Christ was one means by which He could draw souls to Himself. The age of manhood inspires us with solemnness and causes fear, but the age of infancy captivates the heart by its innocent blandishments. Therefore was the Divine Son born as an infant, that by a bond of greater love He might draw to Himself the human soul—the soul that He longed for, that He loved, that He sought for intently. He became a child, that no one link might be wanting in that chain by which His humanity and divinity are inseparably united; and He desired further that His ministry to the soul should begin in the very cradle.

III. *Jesus Christ gave up all things to buy the soul.*—Yearn for the soul, love it, seek it as it pleaseth Thee, O Divine Child! But say what Thou wilt give to purchase a soul so beloved? The answer is “All things.” And indeed He gave all things, for from His love to the human soul “He emptied Himself”

(Philipp. ii. 7), for He expended not only all that belonged to Him as man, but also all the treasures and prerogatives of His Divinity. A great saint, when he had fixed once upon a time the eyes of his mind upon the infant Jesus as He lay in the manger at Bethlehem, asked, "Where, O God, is Thy wisdom, where is Thy power, where is Thy glory, where is Thy divinity, majesty, and eternity?" (S. Thom. de Vill.) Let us think upon these points for a few moments.

Firstly. Where, O Jesus Christ, is Thy wisdom? Behold, O Christian, this babe is the most wise God, in Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. ii. 3), Who is both the Word and the Wisdom of the Father. We have all heard of the wonderful wisdom of Solomon, of Plato, of Lycurgus, and of the seven wise men of Greece, but the wisdom of all these united, is but as mere foolishness when compared with the wisdom of Jesus Christ. If the wisdom of all the holy angels was united in one person, it would be as nothing in comparison with the wisdom of our dear Lord, or only as a grain of sand might be, when compared with the universe. Now from the beginning of creation, this God has governed all things by the wisest control, and

still He rules over the universe with so great a providential care, that not a hair of our head is moved without the hidden counsel of His will. But now turn to the stable of Bethlehem; what is it that you behold? A lisping, speechless, feeble infant, wholly dependent upon the government of His mother, ignorantly carried in the arms of his foster-father, and surrounded by humble shepherds. "Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself." (Isa. xlv. 15.) Where, O God, is Thy wisdom? "The Word was made Flesh."

Secondly. Where, O Jesus Christ, is Thy power? This weak infant is the Mighty God, before the might of Whom, the rule of Alexander the Great who subjugated the whole civilised world, or the sway of Xerxes, who led a million men under his standard to the field, is but as a broken reed. This babe is the Almighty One, Who not only created the heavens and the earth, with all their admirable workmanship, by a single word, but Who also, in a moment, by a single breath, is able to blow into nothingness the work of His own hands. There never has been, there is not, nor will there ever be, any one who can resist His will. But what do you now see in the stable? You behold a weak, infirm infant

shivering with cold, Whom the Virgin has wrapped in swaddling bands. Where, O God, is Thy power? "The Word was made Flesh."

Thirdly. Where, O Jesus Christ, is Thy Majesty and glory? This infant lying here in poverty is the most glorious God! You may have heard of the majesty of Ahasuerus, of the riches of Cræsus, of the glory of Cyrus, who obtained tribute from many kingdoms, amassing a vast treasure of gold, silver, and of slaves; but these kings are but as mendicants when compared with Jesus Christ, in Whom "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. ii. 9), or as the poorest soldier. He formed the gold in the heart of the mountains, and the gems in the depths of the sea; He reclines on the throne of His magnificence, and a thousand thousand angels minister before Him, who are watchful for the slightest sign from Him. But what do you see now in the manger? A needy infant, fed with milk, lying upon bed of straw, and warmed by the breath of the ox or the ass. Where, O God, is Thy majesty and glory? "The Word was made Flesh."

Fourthly. Where, O Jesus Christ, is Thy Divinity and Eternity? Behold, this infant

is the Immortal God! We wonder at the long lives of Adam, Seth, Methusaleh, and the other patriarchs, none of whom reached the period of a thousand years even; truly, all these are as a water-jug broken in a moment. This God lives for ever and ever. He has neither "beginning of life nor end of days; He is ageless; He is impassible and immortal. But what do you see now in the stable? An infant both suffering and mortal, nay, anxious for death; the drops of virginal milk soon to be turned into that blood which, with a most ardent desire He longed to pour out for the salvation of the human race. Where, O God, is Thy Divinity and Eternity? "The Word was made Flesh."

VI. *Jesus Christ longed to suffer for the human soul.*—It was for the sake of buying this priceless pearl that our dear Lord, by becoming incarnate as to-day, both gave to us and lavished upon us His wisdom, His power, His glory, His immortality, and the other perfections of the divine nature. Jesus Christ did all this, because He loved the human soul with so ardent a love, and that He might weigh Himself in the scale against it. "This love of Jesus for the soul of man wounded the impassible; it allured the un-

changeable; it bound the insurmountable.”
(Innoc. III.)

What would you further ask me, O my Christian? Would you ask, Whether the Son of God knew beforehand all that He should be called upon to suffer if He took our nature upon Him? I answer, He knew all that should happen to Himself; that He knew full well that He should suffer more grievous temptations than Job; bitterer persecutions than David; greater calumnies than Abimelech, crueller sellers of flesh and blood than Joseph; sharper bonds than Samson; baser mockings than Elijah; a harder death than the Maccabees. Yes! He foreknew all these things, and yet with an immense desire He longed to endure these torments. Yea, rather from the first moment of His birth, He offered Himself to the Divine Father that He might endure these things, until for our souls He had shed the last drop of His blood.

Learn, O Christian, to rightly value thy soul, for which the most Divine Redeemer gave up all that He had, and saved nothing for Himself; being rich, He became poor; being a Lord, He became a slave; being immortal, He became mortal; being God, He became man. To suffer and to die “The Word was made Flesh.”

V. *Jesus Christ valued the soul before all else.*—Sometimes, indeed, in human things, an excessive affection in men so darkens the mind, that base things are loved whilst noble things are scorned; hence some men have esteemed lead rather than gold, glass before gems, and such other like inconsistencies: whence love is called blind. There was the mad love of Caligula for a horse, of Gellia Romana for common stones, of Tiberias for a snake, and of Xerxes for a tree. Such things were by these men valued above all the treasures of the world. So, with all reverence be it said, is it in divine things; for the Son of God so valued the human soul that He gave up all that He had to purchase or redeem it. Hence it follows, that He valued this soul at a very high value indeed. But as God He could not be preoccupied by any passion, He could not be blinded by any affection, but He is alone the proper valuer of His own work. He gave Himself that the soul might become His own possession, and He knows its value better than any one else, for “He knew what was in man.” (S. John ii. 25.)

Lift up thyself, O man, since thou art valued at so high a price. Place the incarnate Son of God in one scale and thy soul in the other, and thou wilt soon see which weight will be the heavier.

It is as if a king, in order to gain possession of a noble palace sold his kingdom; which would prove that he valued it less than the palace for which he sold it. Jesus Christ is a king like this; for the purchase of the palace of the soul He gave neither heaven nor earth, nor the multitude of angels, but Himself; hence we can judge at what price He valued the soul of man, and why it was that "The Word was made Flesh."

VI. *Two practical conclusions.*—What follows from all you have now heard; I desire, O Christians, to impress upon you a twofold lesson. Firstly, I would have you learn to value your own souls above all the treasures of the world. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (S. Matt. xvi. 26.) "Learn thy dignity, O man, and having been made a partaker of the divine nature (2 S. Pet. i. 4), scorn to return to the former sinfulness of your degenerate conversation." (S. Leo.)

When the Stygian tempter shall come and desire you to sell your soul for a little gain, for a puff of vain glory, for some base pleasure; say to him, I am not so vile that I will sell for nothing that precious treasure for which my Lord and

Saviour paid so infinite a price when He "gave Himself for me." (Gal. ii. 20.) By such speech shall the devil be put to shame and rebuke.

Secondly. I desire that this sacred mystery of the Incarnation, by which the soul attained to so high a dignity, be profoundly worshipped. Approach the Lord's manger in Bethlehem, give to thy God thy soul; render to Jesus Christ the best and highest thanks that thou canst, for that immense love which led Him to empty Himself for thee. With what great submission would the spirits of the dead have humbled themselves if this sacred mystery had been ordained for their redemption! A lost spirit once whispered in the ear of a Christian who failed to bend his knee at the "And was made man" during the recitation of the Nicene Creed: "If God had observed such great compassion towards me, I should have lived in perpetual reverence." With us these high and holy things have become so familiar that we are apt to forget their greatness and their glory in their familiarity. Let us be on our guard on this point. The lessons of this high and holy festival, then, are twofold. This day should teach us to value and prize that soul which was bought at so dear a price; and secondly,

to bless and praise and love that Saviour Who took our nature upon Himself as on this day. Then for His sake shall we rightly value the great mystery of godliness, "God was manifest in the flesh;" "The Word was made Flesh."

S. STEPHEN'S DAY.

THE THREE WHO STONE.

"Then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones that he died."—1 Kings xxi. 13.

I. *An historical prophecy of the death of S. Stephen.*—These words describe the end of Naboth, who possessed a vineyard "which was in Jezreel, hard by the palace of Ahab, king of Samaria," (1 Kings xxi. 1), in which, according to the historians, he had made a chamber of ivory, and to the perfection of which nothing was wanting save this vineyard for its garden. Therefore the king said to Naboth, "Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house." (Id. ver. 2.) Naboth refused to sell his ancestral possession; and he said to Ahab: "The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee. And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased, because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken

to him." (Id. 3, 4.) Then the wicked Jezebel planned the false accusation against Naboth, and the Jezreelites "carried him out of the city and stoned him with stones that he died."

These words can be figuratively applied to the blessed Stephen, whom Naboth foreshadowed by his unjust death. This vineyard of Stephen is our mother the Church, which is fruitful as being fertilised by many graces, and which flows with the wine of spiritual consolation. "In the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant." (Isa. v. 7.) Hence the Spouse looking upon Jesus Christ as the elect vine of this vineyard, said, "My beloved is unto me as a cluster of cypress in the vineyards of Engedi." (Cant. i. 13, Vulg.) The cypress is an aromatic tree, with a close grain, which renders the wood very lasting; it emits an aromatic odour, and it flourished at Engedi, a town on the western shore of the Dead Sea, in the wilderness of Judah. Because this cypress is an aromatic tree it represents our dear Lord as planted in the vineyard of His Church, close to which the wicked king, who is the devil, the prince of this world, built himself a palace after the manner of the world. He could not endure the scent of the flowers of this vineyard, the

odour of Christian graces, so he endeavoured to destroy them, and to obtain possession of this "garden of herbs" that he might convert it into a place for sensual pleasure, well knowing that when carnal delights come into the soul, the graces are not able to hold their own. Satan came, therefore, to S. Stephen, asking him to sell a part of his vineyard; came to him by various temptations and crafty persuasions, and he incites him to a relapse by persecution. But he is repulsed by the answer, "The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance unto thee." In his anger, Ahab roused his wife Jezebel against Naboth, who procured the two false witnesses; just as the synagogue begot the sons of perdition, that they should rise up against the Lord's anointed. The devil very often uses wicked men to do that which he could not do himself. So from the synagogue certain of the Libertines and Cyrenians arose, who suborned false witnesses against S. Stephen, and then they "cast him out of the city and stoned him." (Acts vii. 58.) In the Holy Gospel for to-day our Blessed Lord expressed this slaughter prophetically, saying, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy

children together, etc." (S. Matt. xxiii. 37.)

"I sent unto thee Isaiah, and thou hast slain him with the sword; Jeremiah, and thou stonest him; Ezekiel, and thou hast dashed out his brains, dragging him over stones. How canst thou be healed which allowest no physician to come to thee?" (S. Aug.) "Even as a hen has a great affection for its young, and it is so affected by the illness of its offspring that it suffers with them; and, what is rarely found amongst other animals, covering its young with its wings, it fights even the kite. So also Christ, the Wisdom of God, is in a sense made ill through the reception of our flesh, covering our infirmities, and fighting against the devil, lest he should seize us for his prey." (S. Aug.) Thou "stonest them which are sent unto thee." (S. Matt. xxiii. 37.)

II. *Our Blessed Lord stones the world, the devil, and man.*

Firstly. Our Blessed Lord stoned the world. Jesus Christ first stoned the world at His Incarnation, since He is called "the stone which the builders rejected" (S. Matt. xxi. 42), and our Lord adds "whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken." (Id. ver. 44.) They who either injure or despise it shall be so "broken" that they cannot walk upright, "but

on whomsoever it shall fall" in the judgment, he shall be ground to powder by the pain of everlasting perdition. King Nebuchadnezzar beheld in vision "a great image, and the form thereof was terrible" (Dan. ii. 31); its "head was of fine gold, his breast and arms were of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet were formed partly of iron and partly of clay." (Vers. 32, 34.) This image was composed of five kinds of material: of gold and silver, which are very precious; of brass and iron, which are very strong; of clay, which is very mean and contemptible. Moreover, the king saw "that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet, which were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone which smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." (Vers. 34, 35.)

This image represents the world, upon which any worldling, of whom Nebuchadnezzar is a type, gazes with affection, and he beholds in it "the lust of the eyes," or sinful covetousness,

for part of it was composed of gold and silver. He beholds also hateful power and arrogance, to be signified by the iron and brass. Lastly, he notes the foul slipperiness of pleasure, to be represented in the feet of clay.

But Jesus Christ is that great stone which is cut out of the mountain, that is, of the Virgin Mary, without any co-operation of man. He broke in pieces every member of this image. By His birth in the lowly manger, He showed His detestation of pride; by His paltry scrip, He put to shame covetousness; by His choice of an humble mother, He reprobated luxury. At the last judgment, indeed, more effectually He will reduce to nothingness the very elements of which this image was composed, and humble to the dust all the greatness of the world.

It was by the power of His living example that our dear Lord stoned this image of worldliness, composed as it was of pride, covetousness, and sensuality. Thus does our Lord Jesus Christ stone the world.

Secondly. Our Blessed Lord stoned the devil. Our Lord by the power of His Passion stoned the devil, whom He had before deposed by His just judgment. This victory was signified in type by that of David over Goliath, "a champion

of the Philistines, whose height was six cubits and a span" (1 Sam. xvii. 4, 5), and who defied the armies of Israel. David, burning with a holy zeal to avenge his countrymen, went forth to the fight, not clad in Saul's armour, for "he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and his sling was in his hand." (Id. ver. 40.) The tradition is that David slang three stones into the same place of the forehead of the Philistine, which answer to the three temptations of our Blessed Lord. (S. Matt. iv. 1-10.) The Philistines represent the evil spirits, the ministers of Satan; whilst Goliath signifies Satan himself, the Behemoth of whom Job says, "Upon earth there is not his like, who is made without fear." (Job xli. 35.) Israel stands for the human race; and lastly, David is Jesus Christ, Who taking, in His zeal for our salvation, the staff of the cross, and five stones, the wounds from the torrent of His Passion, overthrew the enemy, liberating His people. Or the five stones may further represent the humility of His birth, the piety of His conversation, the patience of His Passion, the power of His Resurrection, and the glory of His Ascension. When, therefore, our Blessed Lord had cast the third stone, the patience of His Passion,

He overthrew the enemy. Let us, therefore, faithfully follow Him as the head does its members. Let us strive manfully, knowing that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (2 Tim. iii. 12.) But you ask, how? Verily, take the "staff" of His cross, and the five stones of contrition, confession, and satisfaction, which last is perfected by three more, which are almsgiving, prayer, and fasting; so that the stones are to be numbered at five; but satisfaction is to be received here for the enjoined repentance.

Our Blessed Lord can cast the first stone of contrition, by which the devil is led to reprove himself. He then can sling the stone of confession upon the same spot, by which He increases the wound. In the third assault He throws the stone of satisfaction, which altogether prostrates him. For it is commanded, "Thou shalt stone him with stones that he die, because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the Lord thy God." (Deut. xiii. 10.) In this way does our Lord Jesus Christ stone the devil.

Thirdly. Our Blessed Lord stones the wicked. Jesus Christ stones all the wicked with the severity of condemnation, for he sends upon

them five very heavy stones, by which they are as it were reduced to ashes. "Depart from Me ye cursed, into everlasting fire." (S. Matt. xxvi. 41.) A type of this stoning is given by Joshua, who tells us that upon the enemies of Israel, "the Lord cast down great stones from heaven upon them" (Josh. x. 11), and "they were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword." (Id.) "Sun, stand thou still upon Gideon, and thou Moon, in the valley of Ajalon" (id. ver. 12), showing that both the sun and moon fought for Israel. For both were able to be seen, and the Lord obeying the voice of a man, they were stationary for nearly eighteen hours. So will be that terrible everlasting punishment, the sun and moon standing in their places immoveable for ever. We read of that fearful hail by which Jesus Christ will stone the unrepentant sinners. "There fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent, and men blasphemed God because of the plague of hail, for the plague thereof was exceeding great." (Rev. xvi. 21.) This represents the greatness, and the unbearableness, of the eternal punishment. The weight of the talent is more than one hundred and twenty pounds. Thus will our

Lord stone the wicked, and those who die in their sins.

III. *The devil stones men.*—Firstly. The devil stones the righteous by adversity. When the devil knew that Job was praised by God, as being a man who was “perfect and upright, and one that feared God and eschewed evil” (Job i. 1), then he besought God that he might both tempt and afflict him, and God gave him power over the body and possessions of Job. Yet for all these things God is to be blessed, who ordains this for us to lead us to glory; so that which the wicked seek out of envy to obtain for our destruction and fall turns out, as in the case of Job, for our real good, for “all things work together for good to them that love God.” (Rom. viii. 28.) Although the will of the devil and his members is evil, do not fear, do not complain, for the power which such receive from the Lord does not work unjustly. This stoning of the righteous by the devil is well represented by Shimei, who, during his flight to Bahurim, “came out” and “cast stones at David, and at all the servants of King David” (2 Sam. xvi. 5, 6); and note the happy sequel to this event, how David returned in peace and Shimei was pardoned. To suffer persecution is the rule of the Christian life,

(2 Tim. iii. 12.) Whilst the devil ever stones the righteous, he generally spares his own followers, who often flourish for a long season.

Secondly. The devil stones the wicked with deadly sin. As the smooth stones of the torrent were sweet unto S. Stephen on account of the exceeding fervour of his love, so to the wicked do the stones of the mud, that is, of vices, seem sweet too, on account of the affection for bodily pleasure, and by that they are compared to the beasts that perish (Ps. xlix. 20); and so by little and little they will wait until the third stoning: that which belongs to condemned men, falls upon them. For although they do not at the present feel pain, yet after a while they shall receive wounds which cannot be healed. And lastly, these wounds Jesus Christ came to cure by His own wounds in this present life; yet, on the contrary, He cannot hereafter heal severe wounds, since afterwards not the smallest venial sin which is joined to mortal sin can be healed, but the sinner will be cast into the eternal grief of burning.

Thirdly. The devil stones the lost with the torments of hell. These torments he takes care to increase in every possible way. "They shall stone thee with stones," with a weight of torments; "and thrust thee through with their

swords," of desperation; "and burn thine houses with fire," thy living bodies. (Ezek. xvi. 40, 41.)

IV. *The sinner stones.*—Firstly. The sinner stones God, nay, he does worse than this, for he crucifies Him by his sins. "They crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame" (Heb. vi. 6), since sinners are like those who derided and crucified Him. For they crucify the Son of God in themselves, who, despising His grace, continue in sins; and they scorn his benefits, by showing how small a delight they have in them. For as when formerly our Blessed Lord was abounding in various gifts, the Jews in their hardness of heart carried stones desirous of stoning him; to whom He said, "Many good works have I showed you; for which of those works do ye stone me?" (S. John x. 32.) So is He truly able to say now to many a Christian, O ungrateful man! O obstinate sinner! how many good things have I given to you, gifts of nature and gifts of grace, and all temporal blessings. I created thee a pure creature; I redeemed thee when fallen; I reformed thee when deformed; I cleansed thy foul body in My blood. What more ought I to have done and I have not done it? Is it on account of these

things that you stone me with blasphemies, perjuries, and the like ?

Secondly: The sinner stones his neighbour. The sinner does this in two ways. In the first place, by neither accepting human blessings nor bearing divine service. For Moses, who obtained many benefits for the children of Israel by his prayers, his companions either stoned or resolved to stone ; as in the case of Miriam and Aaron (Numb. xvi. 1), and of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (Numb. xvi. 6) ; for since they were prone to the envy of their superiors (as if unrestrained), they resolved to avenge for themselves his misfortunes. So "Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, What shall I do unto this people? They be almost ready to stone me." (Exod. xvii. 4.)

Thus it is even now; the hearts of the children of men are so full of envy and rancour, that some stone their neighbour by injurious words, by detractions and ridicule; and others by deeds, by persecutions, deceptions, and oppressions.

In the second place, the sinner stones his neighbour by his own disobedience to the commands of God, and by his evil treatment of those who seek to lead a holy life ; for such as these they deride, they dissuade, they perse-

cute. It was because S. Stephen was a good man that he was deserving of being stoned : of whom it is related, that surrounded by his enemies, he saw the heavens opened (for his sight was comforted by the divine help) "and Jesus" in His human form, "standing on the right hand of the power of God" (Acts vii. 55), for He appeared as when He was crucified to S. Stephen, lest he should waver under his martyrdom. "I see the heavens opened," he said, as if there was nothing between the heavens and himself, "and Jesus standing," for in respect to the body, He was unchanged to the eyes of Stephen, for this vision of His humanity it was in His power to make apparent either afar off or near. Mark now the tender regard of S. Stephen for the salvation of his persecutors ; they run to the stones, and he to prayer ; neither in his bitterest anguish is he forgetful of them, but on bended knee he prayed as suppliantly as effectually.

Do thou, O man, also receive the heavy stone of punishment, every kind of injury and adversity, that hereafter thou mayest receive precious stones in thy crown of glory.

Thirdly. The sinner stones himself. In the first place, the sinner stones himself by the stings or goads of conscience ; in the person of

whom Job speaks when he says, "Why hast thou set me as a mark against Thee, so that I am a burden to myself." (Job vii. 20.) "The soul raises itself in search of the Creator, but being thrown back upon itself, it is bewildered by the beguiling mist of bodily attachments. It asks in a wonderful way, what it is unable to answer itself. Viewing itself as both large and small at the same time, it knows nothing by which it can form a true estimate of itself." (S. Greg.) Hence the stings of a conscience which, numbed by sin, is yet awakening to a new life.

In the second place, the sinner stones himself by those fleshly lusts which war against the soul. "The sluggard is pelted with the dirty stone" of his own sinful desire (Ecclus. xxii. 2), but an earnest active mind cleanses itself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. (2 Cor. vii. 1.)

It was the glory of Him Whom we this day commemorate that a wicked world "stoned Stephen calling upon his God and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." (Acts vii. 59.)

S. JOHN EVANGELIST.

LOVE.

“The disciple whom Jesus loved.”—*S. John xxi. 20.*

I. *The title of love.*—There never was a description more expressive than this; and it finds its true exposition in the following words, which spoken prophetically of our Blessed Lord, can also, with great propriety, be applied to S. John the Evangelist: “My beloved is mine and I am his; he feedeth among the lilies” (Cant. ii. 16); for the Church commemorates to-day that singular love which united our Blessed Lord to S. John, “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” Speaking generally, all who do their dear Lord’s will are His friends, since He has said, “Ye are my friends, if you do whatsoever I command you.” (S. John xv. 14.) In an especial sense, the Apostles were the friends of their divine Master, since they were the repositories of His secrets. “I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my

Father, I have made known unto you." (S. John xv. 15.) Now in a peculiar way beyond this special friendship, S. John was united to Jesus Christ by singular and personal ties of the closest friendship, as is evident from His third saying on the cross, "Woman, behold thy son." (S. John xix. 26.) As each person is distinguished by a particular name, so S. John was distinguished from the other disciples by being called "The disciple whom Jesus loved."

If, then, it be a great honour and dignity to be a servant of the King of Heaven; since he who serves the king is his companion; and to serve God is to reign with Him; how infinitely more exalted a position is it to be not only a servant but a friend of God, and that again not in a general way, but also in a special manner to be knit to Him by a singular bond of friendship? If, according to Cicero, mere human 'friendship is to be valued beyond all other gifts, of how much more account must friendship with God be reckoned? Consider the gifts of the Church, and thou shalt learn that the gifts and office of love and friendship are more excellent than them all. It is on this singular, personal friendship, as manifested between our Blessed Lord and S. John the Evangelist that we would address you to-day

in praise of Him and for your edification ; and as the words of the text find an inspired comment from the words of the Canticles, we will explain the latter as more fully unfolding the meaning of the former, and as showing some of the causes which so knit the heart of the Master to that of the loving disciple.

II. *The manner of loving.*—The manner of loving is expressed by the words, “ My beloved is mine, and I am his ;” implying an absolute and mutual possession the one of the other. Very often it is noted to be the habit of lovers, from the intensity of their feelings, to speak in broken utterances, frequently, too, interrupting their discourse with sighs. How can this defect in speech be atoned for ; a defect which points to a broken and divided will, as its cause ?

Firstly. By co-operation. “ My beloved works with me and I with him.” Neither the husband nor the wife alone are sufficient to produce that offspring which flows from their union, whilst the great love of all is pure and honest conjugal affection. In like manner, man cannot by himself produce any spiritual fruit, any works worthy of merit ; it is needful then that God and man should unite. As our dear Lord becomes the Bridegroom of His Spouse

the Church, man brings his freedom of the will to Him, God fructifies it by His grace ; hence "our sufficiency is of God." (2 Cor. iii. 5.) Man therefore needs the strongest love to exist between Himself and God if he would be able to effect any good work to perfection, and holy and loving act.

Secondly. By agreement. "My beloved agrees with me, and I with him : " He "is white and ruddy " (Cant. v. 10), and such do I also desire to become. " Every beast loveth his like, so also every man that is nearest to himself." (Ecclus. xiii. 19.) My Beloved was "white" at His entrance into the world, for He was as a lily of the Virginal lily ; He was "ruddy" at His departure from the world, for He was reddened by the Blood of His Passion. Our dear Lord was "white" in His perfect purity ; He was "ruddy," inasmuch as He burned with the fire of love. Now these two colours, as representing perfect purity and intense affection, are most grateful to those who love. If we would, then, be one with Jesus Christ, we must seek purity, that "holiness without which no man can see the Lord " (Heb. xii. 14), and also that consuming love by which, for His sake, all the lower desires of this world are burned up and destroyed.

Thirdly. By mutual advantage. "My Beloved is mine." He is living for my good. He was born for me; He lived on earth as Son of Man for me; He died for me; He rose again for me; for my sake He sits at the right hand of God the Father. He is born; "For unto us a child is born" (Isa. ix. 6); He lived on earth spending his whole life for the benefit of man; He "went about doing good" (Acts x. 38); His nights were devoted to prayer, and His days to preaching and the working of miracles; He died "for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity" (Tit. ii. 14); He "loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20); He rose from the dead that He might become both a pledge and an earnest of my own resurrection: "if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen" (1 Cor. xv. 13); He is seated at the right hand of God: "He ever liveth to make intercession." (Heb. vii. 25.) Hence when He ascended, He entered "into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." (Heb. ix, 24.)

S. John the Evangelist must have often applied these words, "My Beloved is Mine," in a particular sense to himself; for our dear Lord showed a special love to him, since young as he was, He allowed him to be one

of the three witnesses of His transfiguration (S. Matt. xvii. 1), and of His raising Jairus' daughter (S. Mark v. 37); to him did our dying Lord give the charge of His mother (S. John xix. 26), and lastly, S. John and S. Matthew were the only two who held a twofold dignity in the Church, being in the number of the four Evangelists, and also of the twelve Apostles.

“And I am His.” This is a necessary consequence to the former proposition; if our Lord Jesus Christ is a great gain and profit to us, we ought to be an honour to Him. “For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died and rose and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living.” (Rom. xiv. 7-9.) For whom more rightly can I live, than for His sake, Who if He had not died I could not have lived? (S. Ber.) He has indeed purchased my life, Who laid down His own life in order to buy mine. S. Paul writes, “He that is married careth for the things of the world, how he may please his wife.” S. John remained unmarried, as one anxious to give to his dear Lord all his thought, love, care, and service;

for "He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord." (1 Cor. vii. 32.)

We should ever seek to realize the grand fact that we belong to Jesus Christ, that we are not our own, that we have been bought with a most precious price. "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me." (Gal. ii. 20.)

"I am His:" all I am, all I have, belongs to Jesus Christ; my thoughts, desires, works, all are His, and whatever is taken away from Him is a most miserable theft; it is ungrateful as well as unjust, for by right, by love, by deed, I am His, wholly His; others may have a share in me by favour, but by right of a mighty love, of a great purchase, I as a Christian belong wholly to my dear Lord.

Fourthly. By mutual desire. Two wills or two purposes are hindrances to any counsel. "My beloved is mine," for He satisfieth my every desire. "Who satisfieth my mouth with good things" (Ps. ciii. 5), being Himself the Highest Good. "I will make all My goodness pass before thee." (Exod. xxxiii. 19.) Therefore

the loving One did not show what the "Beloved" was to Himself, inasmuch as that was an ineffable thing, for it surpassed all sense and intelligence. This was eminently the case with S. John; when he lay on the bosom of his dear Lord, his every desire was fulfilled, his every longing was realized.

"And I am his;" the converse of what has been said. How dear the loving one is to the beloved is not expressed in words, lest it should give rise to any vainglorious feeling on the part of the beloved; but this very silence is suggestive as to the loving one being a great gain to him. He is in his consideration as the son of his mother, and therefore he feels as if the loving one were his brother; and lastly, what is more than this, he is to him as if another self. (Cic.) He who beholds a true friend beholds himself as if in a mirror; so that the absent are present, the needy abound, the weak are strong, and what is more easily expressed in a word, the dead live again. When our Blessed Lord was dead, S. John took his place, and became a son to His mother. "Christ liveth in me." This one fact proves in how great estimation our dear Lord held "the disciple whom He loved;" for could a worthier or a better disciple have been found to receive

so solemn a trust, it would not have been committed unto him.

If we, then, can claim a personal possession in our dear Lord, then He can claim a like personal possession in ourselves. We live not for ourselves; we go out of self towards Him, and He makes us all His own.

III. *The cause of this love.*—"He feedeth among the lilies." (Cant. ii. 16.) These words explain the cause of our Blessed Lord's love for S. John, for he was a lily like Jesus Christ Himself, Who said, "I am the lily of the valleys." (Cant. ii. 1.) Like only assorts with like; and in many respects the human disciple was a copy, imperfect enough, yet still a copy, of his divine Master. "He feedeth among the lilies;" among the pure; amongst men of a humble and contrite heart, who tremble at His word. (Isa. lxii. 2.) We note some qualities in the lily which make it fit to be used as a symbol for the "humble and holy men of heart," of whom S. John was one.

Firstly. The colour of the lily: it is white. In the first place, S. John possessed the whiteness of wisdom, and this is the brightness of light, and therefore He who is the Brightness of His Father's Glory, of the Eternal Light, loved S. John, and filled "him with the spirit

of wisdom." (Ecclus. xv. 5.) S. John "leaned on His breast at supper" (S. John xxi. 20), and drank a deeper draught than the rest of the disciples of heavenly wisdom, for in the breast of Jesus Christ were "hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Col. ii. 2.) He reclined upon the fountain of life, from which blessed spring he gained abundance, that he might become one stream of the four great rivers of Paradise, flowing forth in the Holy Gospels for the irrigation of the land of the whole Church. (S. Aug.)

In the second place, S. John possessed the whiteness of innocence. All the sin and evil he had to encounter he endured with the meekness of wisdom, but he did not create wickedness and sorrow for himself. There are many such gentle loving souls in the world, who seem to have an instinctive sensibility and purity of heart; whose lot seems, too, to be cast in hard lines, who are ever being taught by sad experience conformity of will to lowly suffering. When moral purity is joined with wisdom, a character is formed with which the world has but small sympathy, and over which it loves but too often to play the tyrant. S. John had more than ordinary share of suffering and persecution, but he rose above it all; and

the love that had supported him during his earlier years lighted up the end of his life, and turned that time of natural darkness into the very fulness of glory. The love of Jesus Christ was to S. John as the sun rising, or the beginning of the day and of his life; it was to him at his life's end as a most glorious sun-set, tinging it with the fires and splendours of that land of glory which was so soon to be his portion.

In the third place, S. John possessed the whiteness of chastity, for he was chosen whilst a virgin by our Blessed Lord to be His Apostle, and as such he continued to the end of his life. Amongst souls like his—the “virgin souls who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth”—does our dear Lord love to dwell, for “He feedeth among the lilies;” amongst those souls who by their wisdom, innocence, and chastity, make a representation of Paradise in this world of sorrow.

Secondly. The odour of the lily. The lily has a threefold cause of fragrance. In the first place, it is influenced by the quarter of wind. It is a well known fact, that in gardens where aromatic herbs are grown, they shed their most fragrant odours under the influence a south wind. “Come, Thou south [wind],

blow upon my garden that the spices thereof may blow out." (Cant. iv. 16.) So many a hidden charm and grace, by the soft wind of love and kindness is developed into a new life. Our Lord's love for S. John developed in him all that was lovely. Grace is our south wind. When it blows upon the soul, then doth the spices of our good works flow out. What a lesson of lovingkindness and of gentle treatment of others does this fact manifest to us! Our south wind is the kind word, is the kind look, the ready sympathy we receive from others.

In the second place, by bruising or crushing. When some species of lilies are crushed or bruised, they then give out a full odour. "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?" (Cant. iii. 6.) So does affliction and trouble bring out from some natures all their latent goodness. They need the crushing process of adversity to develop many a noble quality which, till the time of trial, remained dormant. Hence S. John Evangelist, with others of the Apostles and disciples of the Lord, was called upon to endure many trials of his faith.

In the third place, by burning with fire. When the frankincense is cast upon the hot coal, then

does the aroma diffuse itself from its substance, "frankincense burning in the fire." (Ecclus. iv. 9.) When the old nature is consumed by the fire of divine grace, then an offering is made of a sweet smelling savour, which is acceptable to God. By each of these causes, an aroma was sent forth in the life of S. John. He was a garden of pleasure. If God said "My delights are with the sons of men" (Prov. viii. 31), how much greater must have been His delights in the Son of Man, Whom He desired to be considered by the Virgin as her son? S. John was that garden of delights; and the South Wind of the Holy Ghost blowing upon him, and the secrets of God inspiring him with heavenly doctrine, he abounded in a good odour. S. John was a storehouse of the Holy Spirit, filled with the different graces. By the persecutions and banishment which he endured, the lilies were bruised and crushed; by the boiling oil, by the exile, by the poison; and a sweet savour came from them all, for he endured his tribulations with meekness, and gave thanks for suffering. S. John was also, as it were, a furnace of the Holy Spirit, for since he was so greatly loved by God, so did he in turn love God greatly, both in Himself and in all His members. His love was great; he loved all goodness and abounded

in good works ; so the fire of love was another source of his good odour.

Thirdly. The lily relieves pain. S. John resembled the lily, as, like it, he lessened the grief of the soul, as the leaf of the lily lessens the pains of the body ; for his life is rich in acts of love and mercy towards others. It is an old tradition, that once the philosopher Antoninus caused some valuable jewels to be broken up into pieces in the forum, in order to show his contempt for the glory of the world. It is reported, that by his prayers S. John caused the mischief to be repaired, so that the value of them might be laid out upon the poor.

The fulness of the riches of our Lord Jesus Christ is the lesson which this commemoration of S. John Evangelist so emphatically teaches ; of a love that demands on our parts a loving spirit for its reception. If we love Him, we cannot fail to be of the number of those whom "Jesus loved ;" and our joy and hope is that "My Beloved is mine, and I am His."

THE INNOCENTS' DAY.

THE FRUITS OF SUFFERING.

“They are without fault before the throne of God.”—

Rev. xiv. 5.

WHY are they thus? Because “These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; therefore they are before the throne of God.” (Rev. vii. 14, 15.) In which words three points are to be noted: Firstly, the violence of their suffering, “which came out of great tribulation.” “All that have pleased God passed through many tribulations.” (Judith viii. 23.) Secondly, the holiness of their purity “have washed their robes and made them white: “Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own Blood.” (Rev. i. 5.) Thirdly, the magnificence of their sublimity; “they are before the throne of God.” “O how glorious is that heavenly kingdom where all the saints will rejoice with

Jesus Christ, being clad in white robes." (S. Aug.) This is the end to which suffering endured for the sake of our Blessed Lord ever leads; it is the cross which precedes the crown; it is the humiliation which is to be followed by the glory.

From the nature of their sufferings, this festival of the Holy Innocents ought to be devoutly celebrated, and there are three elements in their passion which will form the subject of our present meditation. It was a precious passion, for it was endured in the stead of the infant Jesus; it was a glorious passion, as being the first suffering for His sake; and lastly, it was a grievous passion, because it was so extensive.

I. *Their passion was precious from its severity.*
—In the first place it must be noted that it is possible to gain the crown of martyrdom for various reasons: for the sake of righteousness, as Abel; for the law of God, as the Maccabees; for the assertion of the truth, as Isaiah and Jeremiah; for the condemnation of sin, as S. John Baptist; for the salvation of all men, as Jesus Christ; for the faith and name of our Blessed Lord, as S. Stephen; for the liberty of the Church, as S. Thomas of Canterbury; and lastly for, or in the place of Jesus, as these

Holy Innocents. In any one of these forms of martyrdom Jesus Christ Himself is in a certain sense slain, for it was He whom Herod sought alone to kill. (S. Anselm.) Now from this time, O good Jesu, thou hast begun to suffer ; not alone hast Thou borne this vexation of Thy infancy, but Thou hast also received death in Thy young children which were slain for Thy sake. "When Herod saw that he was mocked of the wise men he was exceeding wroth, and sent forth and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem and in the coasts thereof, from two years old and under" (S. Matt. ii. 16), lest by any means Jesus, being as yet unknown, should escape his vengeance. O blind impiety of foolish envy ! that thinkest that divine counsel is to be disturbed by thy madness. The death of Jesus Christ does not belong to thy time. First must the Gospel be founded ; first must the kingdom of God be preached ; first must healings be vouchsafed ; first must miracles be wrought. Why wouldst thou have that for thine own crime which is to be the work of others ? and while thou art not to have the perpetrating of this wickedness, why precipitate on thyself alone the guilt of desiring it ? (S. Leo.) But Herod was hindered in the execution of his design for some time ; for upon the

accusations of his sons he was summoned by Cæsar and detained in Rome nearly a year. In the end, however, he was confirmed in his rule, and he gained a decree in his own favour which enforced the submission of his family, and gave him the power to will away the kingdom at his death. Herod was unfortunately made more daring and unscrupulous by this further establishment of his power, and having returned home, he endeavoured to put into execution all the desires of his perverse mind. The cruelty and malignity of his disposition is but too clearly seen by his decree concerning the infants of Bethlehem and its neighbourhood, the lives of whom he sacrificed in his mad design to put the Infant Saviour to death. It is therefore both right and proper, since these infants were slain for the sake of Jesus Christ, to render them all fitting honours and commemoration, but still not to sorrow for them; to make vows but not to shed tears at these mysteries of providence; for He was the cause of the punishment who appeared as the cause of the crown. He who furnished the hatred, furnished also the reward in the matter. (S. August.) It was for their own Lord, rather than for His benefit, that they suffered. "The Just One saw that iniquity increased on earth,

and therefore He sent His messenger, and removed a multitude of fair little ones, and called them to the pavilion of happiness." (S. Ephr.)

II. *Their passion was glorious in its priority.*

—These infants who died for the sake of Jesus Christ were His first martyrs, and fully attained to the praise of martyrdom; hence they are called its "first-fruits" and its "flowers," "the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb." (Rev. xiv. 4.) "Rightly they are called the flowers of martyrs, who, having sprung up in the mid-winter of infidelity, and who, bursting forth as the first buds of the Church, were wasted by a certain hoar-frost of persecution." (S. Aug.) The Holy Innocents were therefore tender plantings springing up in the church. These Holy Innocents were not only martyrs, but the first fruits of the martyrs, for they suffered immediately after the birth of our blessed Lord, and before His Passion, so that they were the first offerings which Jesus Christ, as son of Man, had, being yet a child, to present to His Heavenly Father. In each one of the Innocents was He Himself slain; for each of them was killed lest haply he might be the Child Jesus, whose life Herod sought for in order to take it away.

III. *Their passion was grievous in its bitter-*

ness.—This attribute of their Passion was caused by the tenderness of their age. They received death which as yet knew not how to live, whose only crime in the eyes of Herod was that they had been born. Oh! how cruel was this edict of Herod, by which so savagely he ordered suckling children to be slain. Oh! grievous and mournful slaughter; for these little ones were seized, some from their mothers' breasts, others from their couches, others from their parents' hands, and others from their parents' knees on which they were playing. These poor innocents, without wringing any pity from the raging victors, were either thrown from the walls, or killed by the sword, or suffocated by being seized by the strong hands of the soldiery. Then was the land to be seen covered with the corpses of these little ones, and the ground to be reddened with their blood; then was to be heard the wail of the mothers, and the fulfilment of that which was spoken of by Jeremiah: "In Rama there was a voice heard; lamentation and weeping and great mourning." (S. Matt. ii. 17.) "This Rama," S. Jerome says, "is not to be understood of a certain place which is in the vicinity of Gibeah and Geba, but the word means that which is high, so that the voice heard in Ramah, signifies that it was

a high or loud voice, which was dispersed abroad both far and near, and all attempts to found a southern Ramah have failed. The spiritual meaning may also take a wider significance, for the voice heard in Ramah or on high, may refer to the oppression and slaughter of the Innocents crying up to heaven itself against their oppressors and murderers, as we read after the murder of Abel: "The Lord said unto Cain, What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto Me from the ground." (Gen. iv. 10.)

IV. *Some Practical Lessons of the Festival.*—

Firstly. We must look for a mingled portion on earth. Seeing, then, that this persecution of the Holy Innocents was predicted long before it came to pass, we ought to be animated so to bear our several adversities and tribulations, that one day we may be found worthy to take our place amongst them. In the Child Jesus we have the strongest possible example laid down for our imitation. "The young Child was sent into Egypt," that we may learn to be prepared to endure trials from the very beginning of life, for Jesus Christ endured His afflictions from the very cradle itself; so that, bearing this fact in mind, when trouble comes in all its various forms, we shall not be

disturbed in our minds, but we will nobly bear it, both sustained by this example, and also by the remembrance that great tribulations are the inseparable companions of great graces. (S. Augus.) Mark well, also, that God being merciful, often mingles some joy in our sorrow ; He puts a few drops of sweetness in our bitter cup ; He always does this with His Holy ones, whom He suffers not to continue any long time in either joy or in sorrow. This was exemplified in the case of Joseph the foster father, in his suspicion of his wife, but the angel of the Lord was soon with Him in his dream, taking away his cause of trouble, and altogether extinguishing his fear, nay, changing it into a feeling of exultation when he saw with what portents the Child was born ; the appearance of the star and the adoration of the magi. Again, he fell into grief and trouble, for " Herod sought the young Child's life, and therefore it was needful for him to flee into Egypt." (S. Augus.) But he was not kept there in banishment for any very long period.

Secondly. We must aim at the purity of the Holy Innocents. These little ones were taken away from this wicked world before they had committed any actual sin, and all their original sin was washed away in this their martyr-

dom and their baptism of blood ; and so because they were "without fault," or sin, they are permitted to appear "before the throne of God." In their reward after suffering we read our own lesson in holiness. We cannot for a moment believe that any sinner who is still in sin, will be fit to stand with the holy angels, and to minister directly to the Most High. All will need to be eternally cleansed, and conformed to the most pure Jesus Christ and the Holy Innocents, before they can be admitted to this high dignity. The doors of the dignities of this world even, are not open now to those whose conduct is suspicious, or whose lives are an open shame ; and the Church holds those who are hardened sinners before God and the heavenly court, to be still in deadly sin. If any leprous or unclean person offers himself for the office of the priesthood, he is rejected at once, being noted by the eye of man only ; but how much more will the sinner be rejected from the orders of angels, where all who are found there are both innocent and pure. Hence S. John writes, "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may enter in through the gates into the city" (Rev. xxii. 14), for "there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth." (Rev. xxi. 27.) Divine grace

makes us to become as little children ; it purifies us by the fire of love, and constrains us to offer up ourselves a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.

Thirdly. We must take hope and courage from their present joy. The Holy Innocents being before the throne, see God, and enjoy the Beatific Vision. S. Chrysostom explains our Blessed Lord's words, " no man hath seen God at any time " (S. John i. 18), to mean that God Himself could never be seen by prophets, angels, nor archangels, for the Uncreated could never be seen by the created intelligence ; but, on the contrary, S. Paul, speaking of the present and future, contrasts them thus : " Now we see through a glass dimly, but then face to face " (1 Cor. xiii. 12) ; and he further refers us to a time when we shall know even as we are known. Without any doubt, there is implanted in the mind of man, reasons the great S. Thomas Aquinas, a natural desire of knowing the cause when its effects are beheld, and this desire engenders the feeling of admiration in man. If, therefore, the intellect of the rational creature be not able to attain to the knowledge of a first cause, then we must admit that a vain desire has been implanted in the nature of man, a desire which has no purpose, since it never

can be gratified. The existence of a faculty without any use for it, is contrary to the whole analogy of God's creation ; we are bound, therefore, to conclude that by the pure in heart God will be one day seen by a comprehensive vision.

The Holy Innocents suffered in a season during which they were imperfect ; "they gained the palm of victory ere they had acquired their natural sense" (S. Amb.) ; but then they were perfected by suffering, and every imperfection of infancy was in a moment and for ever put away from them. So we, too, suffer, being yet imperfect ; by suffering at length we pass onwards to our perfection, for "when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part is done away." (1 Cor. xiii. 10.)

Fourthly. We must not be unsettled at the apparent triumph of wickedness. "That Son who created the world ; Who governs the world ; Who does all things that He wills ; Who disposes everything in a marvellous and incomparable order ; He ordained, He enacted this, that, O Herod, by thy mad envy, these infants should suffer a death most precious ; and that which a friend could not do in order to procure your salvation, this an enemy was enabled to perform for your destruction. To this end,

therefore, Jesus Christ suffered thee to slay the infants, that they might triumph over thee ; He allowed thee to perpetrate this crime, and He led these Innocents through suffering to the crown of life. It is one and the same Almighty Lord Who, as a child, is flying into Egypt ; one and the same Who condescended to escape from thy cruelty, the majesty of Whom thou couldest not escape." (S. Fulg.) There is nothing to discourage us in the seeming triumph and prosperity of the wicked ; they are but instruments in the hands of God, working out His wise purposes for the salvation of the just. Against every seeming contradiction, every form of unjust dealing, of perplexity and of sorrow, we should arm ourselves with the inspired declaration : " We know that all things work together for good to them that love God." (Rom. viii. 28.)

THE CIRCUMCISION.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

“Eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the Child.”—*S. Luke ii. 21.*

I. *Why our Blessed Lord was circumcised.*—It has often been questioned amongst the great Fathers of the Church why our Blessed Lord was born of the seed of David; of the Jewish rather than of the Gentile race. Seeing that He knew all things from the beginning to the end, He knew how ill the Jews would use Him; how they would treat Him with the utmost inhumanity and cruelty, and how afterwards they would condemn Him to a most cruel death. Why then did He deign to come of a race so unnatural? Why did He choose to have the synagogue for His mother? Why did He not rather elect the faithful Gentiles to be His ancestors; those whom He foresaw would be faithful, and would accept Him as the true Messiah and as the Son of God?

To these questions it is answered, that our dear Lord selected the Jews to be His fathers after the flesh:—Firstly, that the various promises and prophecies of the Old Testament might be fulfilled in Himself, for Abraham was to be blessed in Him, and David was to have an eternal successor. Secondly, S. Irenæus gives us an answer which is not less holy than it is mystical. “The Gentiles,” he writes, “have no circumcision.” That our Lord might be circumcised as soon as He was made man, He desired to take His origin from Hebrew instead of from Gentile blood. Yet this answer if anything increases, rather than diminishes, the doubt which is implied in our question. Circumcision was instituted for the removal of original sin and many other defilements, but our Blessed Lord was pure and perfect; He was not subject to the spot of sin, so He could not be brought by any need of His own under the law of circumcision, and therefore it behoved him to be born of Gentile blood. “Is not circumcision an indication of the superfluity of sin? What is superfluous in Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, that it needs circumcision? Art Thou not true God, of God the Father, and true Man, born of the Virgin Mary without sin? What art thou doing circumcising Him? Dost

thou think that He can fall under the sentence? The uncircumcised man child . . . that soul shall be cut off from Israel?" (Gen. xvii. 14.) (S. Bern.)

What satisfactory reason then can be given for the circumcision of our Lord that we may not be forced to consider it an useless ceremony? Jesus Christ was circumcised, "that He might prove the truth of His human flesh; that He might approve of circumcision; that He might confess Himself to be born of the seed of Abraham; that He might leave the Jews without excuse if they should not receive Him; that by His example He might commend the grace of obedience to us; and lastly, that by Himself bearing the burden of the law, He might be able to deliver others from a like burden." (S. Thos: Aq.) It is quite true that His circumcision confuted the old heresies of Appolinaris, of Valentinus, of the Manichees, and others, who asserted that the body of Jesus Christ was only a phantom, and not a real and true body. This first blood-shedding was an undeniable test of His true humanity, and the reality of His Incarnate Body. The answer of S. Irenæus holds good after all, and his words, "He was born in Judæa, and not among the Gentiles, because they had no circumcision,"

point to the true significance of the event which we this day celebrate ; for in this circumcision the first outpourings of His precious Blood were made, and by the sharp knife of the circumcising priest, was the way of that Passion cut out to which Jesus Christ was hastening with so ardent a desire that He chose the Jewish rather than the Gentile root, from whence to spring into our lowly life. "The hard pruning knife was applied to the Divine Flesh, that in cutting it the pain might move the infant to the usual groan, so that the tender age of the eighth day might be saddened by suffering." (S. de Cassia.) "He began to suffer for us betimes, and He who did no sin began to bear to-day the punishment of our sins ; He willed to shed His Blood for us not only in manhood, but also in infancy." (Ludolph.) The Circumcision of the Lord was the forerunner of His Passion.

II. *The Passion a sequel to the Circumcision.*—The Passion was the end of what the circumcision was the beginning ; the things presaged in infancy were accomplished in manhood.

Firstly, remark who were the enemies and friends of Jesus Christ. We read in S. Matthew, "From that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples how that He must go

unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things, and be killed." (S. Matt. xvi. 21.) He indicated that through a sea of blood, on the wood of the cross, by the oars of the tormentors, He was about to pass over the deep of death, that men through Him might gain the harbour of eternal happiness.

Jesus Christ had never spoken quite so plainly before of that "decease which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem," and therefore S. Peter on hearing these words wondered, and rose up; earnestly wishing to preserve the life of his Lord, he sought to dissuade Him from His purpose, saying to Him, "Be it far from Thee, Lord; this shall not be unto Thee. This thought afflicts us Thy disciples; change Thy counsel; give up this sad journey; we all desire that Thou shouldest rather remain with us than that Thou shouldest hasten to Thy death, in order to obtain another life for us. Is Thy care for us so great, and our disease so mortal, O Thou Heavenly Physician, that Thou hastest to apply to us the bath of Thy blood? Be it far from Thee, Lord. We will willingly die, rather than Thy blood should be shed, and truly it is too high a price for Thee to pay; it is like redeeming lead with the same weight of gold." Then came our dear Lord's

rebuke, uttered with fixed eyes and rather severe countenance turned toward S. Peter. "I am ashamed of thee, O Peter, that thou hast so far forgotten thyself as to impugn My honour. I have heretofore taken thee for a friend, but thou now disappointest My hope in thee, since thou renderest thyself unworthy of this name. Go away, O enemy, and presume not again to come before me. 'Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me.'" (S. Matt. xvi. 23.) We can imagine Peter filled with shame, avoiding his Master's glance, and keeping for a short time at a distance from Him. Yet what was S. Peter's offence? "It was an undue ardour and excessive love for his Lord and Saviour." (S. Jer.) S. Peter was both "Satan" and "an offence," inasmuch as he would dissuade our Blessed Lord from pouring out His precious blood.

Note the contrast. The wretched Judas, a thief and hard-hearted, into whom Satan had indeed entered, came with a mock kiss to betray his divine Master into the hands of His enemies after the agony in the garden, saying, "Hail, Master." Yet Jesus said unto him, "Friend." What meaneth this title? The loving disciple is "Satan" and "an offence," whilst the cowardly traitor was called "Friend."

How is this? Is there no mistake in our Blessed Lord's use of this word "friend?" It might be that Jesus still loved Judas, traitor as he was, or that our Blessed Lord desired to awaken remorse in him for his great guilt; but the chief reason why he was so called, was because Judas was an unconscious agent in carrying on our dear Lord's great and longed-for passion; because he was, as it were, another priest of the circumcision. Judas was the "friend" of Jesus Christ, since he led him onwards to the cross.

III. *The prayer in the garden was an extension of the Circumcision.*—If our Blessed Lord so loved to die, why should He pray at His agony in the garden of Gethsemane, "O my Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me?" (S. Matt. xxvi. 29.) Was not this a request that death might be removed from Him? Oh, no. It may be, that He desired the agony to pass from His soul to His body (S. Aug.); it may be, that He used these words to prove how thoroughly human He was (Bede); it may be that these words did not express any determination of the will, but only the passing emotion of a natural affection (Caiet.); it may be, that He thought of His countrymen, and for their sakes prayed that they might not be guilty

of so great a sin (S. Jer.); it may be, that He desired the Gentiles to be saved without the casting away of the Jews. Doubtless the true explanation is, that our Blessed Lord longed for more suffering than even the cup He was about to drink contained. As the fevered patient longs for a copious draught of water, which he must not have, so our Blessed Lord had been promised not only a torrent, but also an inexhaustible ocean of torment. "I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me." (Ps. lxxix. 2.) When our Blessed Lord saw what He deemed to be a small cup of suffering offered to Him by the angel, He was inwardly moved. What is this, O my Father, that Thou hast done against Thy promise? I was looking for a sea of passion, and Thou presentest me with but a cupful. "I suffer these things for the elect, but since they seem to be light tortures, add flagellations, wound to wounds, burn me, smite me, crucify me; all these things, and greater sufferings than these, I thirst for with my whole desire." (S. Lau. Just.) In proof of this our dear Lord went forth to meet His betrayer with all readiness and cheerfulness, saying, "Rise, let us be going." (S. Matt. xxvi. 46.) This prayer at the agony in the garden was the sequel to the

longing desire for suffering which found its first voice at the circumcision. The circumcision spoke in act, the agony spoke in deed and in word too; and both voices pleaded for more suffering.

IV. *The cry on the cross was an extension of the Circumcision.*—"My God! My God! Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (S. Matt. xxvii. 46.) This, the fourth of our Blessed Lord's sayings, uttered on the cross, expressed the same longing for suffering which the circumcision has so long before expressed in act. It did not betoken the desolation of the "darling one," or that He shrank from the agony of the cross, but it told of the weight of sin for which He suffered. (Origen.) He speaks as a man crucified, to God for me; for we are truly forsaken when God leaves us. (Theod.) But this cry is also a complaint; yet not on account of His sufferings, but rather because a longer life had not been granted to Him, during which He could suffer more. Why, O Father, hast Thou so quickly given Me over to death? Why not prolong the time of My departure, that I might be crucified for man more and more? (Bede.) The suffering of Jesus Christ was in covenant with His Father, and the end of that suffering seemed to be a breaking of that covenant. This

cry on the cross was, then, but another echo of the cry of the Infant which was heard in the Temple when He was eight days old.

V. *The prayer of Habakkuk contains the lesson of the Circumcision.*—That our dear Lord might not quench that burning desire of suffering which His circumcision had excited, He suffered some two years before the prophetic time for His death. We read, “O Lord, revive my work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years, make known.” (Habak. iii. 2). This middle period may refer to the condition of the world, to its middle stage between the creation and the final judgment, but its reference is doubtless, also, to the mortal life of man; to the half of the time which it is appointed for him to live. “The days of our years are threescore and ten.” (Ps. xc. 10.) “The midst of the years” of this the natural length of man’s life, our Blessed Lord shortened in His great desire to suffer. The prayer of Habakkuk can thus be rendered: I beseech Thee, O God, that when Thy only-begotten Son shall take our nature upon Him that Thou wilt “revive” the human race, “Thy work,” in the middle of His life, when He has attained to the age of thirty-five years. The prayer so interpreted was answered two years before its allotted time.

VI. *The application of this thought of the festival.*—The circumcision was the expression of a great desire ; the beginning of an end. A good beginning makes a good end, and the contrary. The heathen acknowledged this fact by celebrating with festivals the advent of the several seasons. There were old legends that the bees shed their honey in the mouths of Pindar, Plato, and S. Ambrose, when they were infants. The striving of Jacob and Esau in the womb (Gen. xxv. 12) was repeated in their after lives. So our Blessed Lord took the Circumcision for His beginning—a plain sign that He would be ready to pour out His blood for our redemption ; that He would truly show Himself to be our Saviour. His work for us was not one of impulse, no spasmodic attempt, but the consistent execution of a settled and a long foreseen purpose.

From the Circumcision, viewed as the beginning of sorrow in relation to the end of suffering on the cross we learn : Firstly, ever to connect the end with the beginning ; the sowing with the reaping ; youth with manhood ; this life with the next.

Secondly. To maintain a consistent course of action, varying it as circumstances may

require, but never losing sight of its ultimate aim and issue.

Thirdly. To wait patiently for the end to come. Our Blessed Lord's great desire did not lead Him to allow of His death until His work was done ; until He could truly say, " It is finished," He restrained His longing ; and when the fit and appropriate time for its fulfilment had arrived, then " He yielded up the ghost." He was circumcised in the Temple ; He was offered upon the altar of the cross.

THE EPIPHANY.

SERMON I.

THE STAR OF GRACE.

“ We have seen His star in the East, and are come to worship Him.”—*S. Matt.* ii. 2.

I. *The Star of the Wise Men.* On the very day that our Blessed Lord was born an unusual phenomenon appeared in the heavens. An heavenly body was seen in the sky, like a star of such exceeding brightness that daylight could not obscure it. “ His star;” the star of Jesus, never seen before or afterwards, having an unusual course in the heavens, guiding the Magi to the Holy Infant; standing over His lowly resting-place, and then disappearing for ever. This meteor appeared in the far East; it was not seen in Judæa: it led the “ wise men ” from the East westwards, and showed them where to find their King. They knew, not by angelical ministration, but by an inward inspiration, the import of this

celestial sign; for "He Who vouchsafed the sign, gave understanding to those who beheld it; and that which he made them to understand, He caused them also to seek after; and He, when sought, presented Himself to be found." (S. Leo. Mag.) Long ago they had known that when Jesus Christ should be born, a star would arise—for these wise men were either the descendants of Balaam, or the neighbours of those descendants, and the prophet's words were familiar to them: "There shall come a star out of Jacob." (Numb. xxiv. 17.) Their very expression implies that they supposed the Jews to be well acquainted with that prophecy, of which as Gentiles they were not ignorant. They do not say, "We have seen a certain star in the east," but "we have seen His star;" for they spoke of that which all men knew would appear when the Saviour was born. Lastly, we remark with S. Gregory, how like a father, God teaches us in such ways as we are most capable of learning. The "wise men," by their habit of life, were accustomed to study the heavens, and so by a sign in the heavens, God vouchsafes to reveal to them the wondrous birth in Bethlehem of Judæa in the days of Herod the king.

The spiritual meaning of this star is the

shining over the whole world of that grace which came into it by the presence of Jesus Christ. The star represents spiritually the Star of Grace; and the several phenomena of this star correspond with a like number of the attributes of divine grace.

II. *The appearance of the star.*—It was seen in the air; neither with the other planets high in heaven, nor like an *ignis fatuus* hovering over the earth. It shone in the air which is between heaven and earth, teaching us neither by pride and presumption to endeavour to ascend into heaven, nor by excessive fear to be content to lie upon the earth, but to stand midway between heaven and earth, supported by hope and the love of God. To such as these, does the grace of God, the star of Jesus, brightly shine for their comfort and guidance. When the Prophet was to have revealed to him some of the more hidden and mysterious workings of sin, he tells us that “the Spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven” (Ezek. viii. 3); signifying by this fact that man is placed in a middle state, since God made man with a bodily nature and ordained that this body, in its powers and its desires, should cling to the earth. But God also endowed man with a spiritual being which is capable of great eleva-

tion. Man is composed, then, of a twofold nature—of a corporeal and of a spiritual being. By this, his twofold constitution, he is taught that he should not unduly exalt himself by presumption, or unduly depress himself by craven fear, but that, buoyed up by hope, and animated by the love of God, he is to shine as a light in the world, in it, and yet above it, like the star of Jesus, shining by the grace of His glory. So to shine, is to have “our conversation in heaven” whilst still living in this world of sin; is to “walk by faith and not by sight;” is to “use this world as not abusing it;” is to make this life a middle state between that non-existence out of which we came, and that glorious and immortal life into which we are all hastening. Nothing great or holy or Christlike can belong to us whilst as earth-born we cling to our parent earth, and set our affections on things below; undue presumption was the cause of Satan’s fall as Lucifer from heaven. Hope and love and faith are as wings by which the soul mounts aloft, still owning and claiming many a near and very dear relationship with earth; and yet ever and anon rising above the toil and chafe of the world, seeking a purer and calmer atmosphere, being “in the spirit.”

III. *The hiding or occultation of this star.—*

We read in the Holy Gospel that this star was seen in the east, and from history, that it was remarked at Rome, while from the silence of the Evangelists we are bound to conclude that it was not seen at Jerusalem, which was in a middle situation. Now the east and the west may be taken as symbols of our birth and our death, and the city in the midst, is a type of the middle period of our span of life. The consideration of our birth, of our lowly beginning, of our helpless and weak infancy, is a cause of humility; it brings all the littleness of our nature before us in its plainest and its strongest colours. Humility is grace which is brought into our soul. "God giveth grace to the humble." (1 S. Pet. v. 5.) The thought of death is in one sense a cause for fear, but fear expels sin. "The fear of the Lord driveth out sin." (Ecclus. i. 27.) The thought over a long life, is, on the other hand, a ground of pride and false confidence. "I will pull down my barns and build bigger, and I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years." (S. Luke xii. 19.) So then it follows, that in the east and west—that is, in the consideration of our birth and death, the star, which is the grace of God, is infused, whilst it is hidden in the consideration of this middle present time

with all its engrossing cares and its pressing and immediate needs.

The Star of Grace is hidden also from those who are unworthy to behold its brightness; it is like the grace of God which gave light to the land of Goshen, whilst Egypt itself was visited with the plague of darkness. So the word can be spoken, but often spoken in vain, "not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." (Heb. iv. 2.) "There are, it may be, so many voices in the world, and none of them is without signification" (1 Cor. xiv. 10), and yet our ears may be dead that we hear them not. Once the risen Lord of Life walked and talked with two of His own disciples, "but their eyes were holden that they should not know Him." (S. Luke xxiv. 16.) The Star of Grace is ever shining, but the eye of the mind needs cleansing and purifying in order that it may be discerned. There is an occultation or hiding of this star when the light within us is turned to darkness, when we cannot discern the signs of the times. To the "wise men" who waited for further light, the Star of Grace shone brightly indeed, whilst by the wicked Herod it was not seen. It is the holy soul who alone can say, "The Lord my God will enlighten my darkness." (Ps. xviii. 27.)

IV. *The procession of the star.*—"Lo! the star which they saw in the east went before them." He who earnestly desires to come to our Blessed Lord must be led to Him by a discretion that is full of light; and such a leader was this starry guide. "Let thine eyelids look straight before thee." (Prov. iv. 25.) Some have thought this star might be an angel of light, and that they who followed it were visibly led by an angel to find the King of angels; that this angel humbles men by infusing filial fear into their souls, and that as he guards men, so does he also protect them from the effects of that excessive fear into which the wicked fall who are "in great fear." (Ps. xiv. 5.) Others have thought that this star might be a manifestation of even God the Holy Ghost Himself, Who sat upon each of the Apostles as "cloven tongues, like of fire" (Acts ii. 3), inflaming the Magi with a holy love towards God, and showing unto them "a more excellent way" (1 Cor. xii. 31), at the same time that He so blinds the wicked that "they may not see the sun." (Ps. lviii. 8.) However this may be, we know that in God's Providence the Star of Grace is ever to be seen in the world now; being to us what the Pillar of Fire and of Cloud were to the Israelites when they were travelling through

their wilderness and were in pilgrimage. The Star of Grace was seen by all God's servants of the olden time, one of whom hesitates not to say, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." (Ps. lxxiii. 24.) The Star of Grace shines before us in every text of Holy Scripture; and it was partly because the Jews had such distinct prophecies of our Blessed Lord in the testimony of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms (S. Luke xxiv. 44) concerning Him, that "His Star" did not appear whilst the Magi were there; the Sun of Scripture hiding the lesser light of the star—but showed itself to them again immediately they departed from the city. The Jews had "Moses and the Prophets, let them hear them." (S. Luke xvi. 29.) They heard them not; so the Magi asked the Jews, and disturbed Herod, that at length the truth might be made more manifest. Let us ever seek to follow the leadings of this Star of Grace, whether it shines in the spiritual promptings of God the Holy Ghost, or in God's Providence, or in Holy Scripture, feeling sure that let it lead us where it may, it will of a surety lead us to Jesus Christ.

V. *The motion of the Star.*—"Till it came where the young Child was."

Firstly, the ordinary planets move in circles which are called orbits, but the motion of this star was in a straight line. The journey of these faithful followers of Jesus Christ was not to be increased by a single cubit; they were led by the shortest and most direct route possible; they were taken by a straight course into the presence of the King. So it is with the Star of Grace. In its guiding through this world of sin, it leads the soul onwards to Jesus in a straight and unbroken course, from baptism to confirmation, from confirmation to first communion, from first communion to the very frequent participation of Jesus Christ. There is nothing tortuous or indirect in this successive unfolding of Divine grace. As God deals with us, so ought our course in the world to be a straightforward one, a going on to perfection, free from all turnings about, either to the right hand or to the left. "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus." (Heb. xii. 12.)

Secondly. The motion of this star was slow and steady. Had it been a rapid motion the wise men could not have kept up with it; it would soon have outstripped them, and left them behind in darkness and uncertainty. In this case, as in many other cases, God tempered

the wind to the shorn lamb. The star moved gradually onwards towards its goal. So does the Star of Grace lead us onward by slow and imperceptible degrees, "line upon line and precept upon precept; here a little and there a little." (Isa. xxviii. 10.) The growth in grace, like the growth in nature, is very slow, and can only be estimated by a comparison between one time of life and another. In all our actions of life we should be careful against doing anything with an indiscreet fervour, but ever act slowly and with discretion.

Thirdly. The motion of the star was not a violent or erratic one, but it was one which was nevertheless ordained by Divine Providence. (S. Chrysos.) The Star of Grace shines, moving onwards, as God may direct it, across the wild and wayward heart of man, acting upon the soul just as He sees fit to direct its energy and operation. It shines in obedience to the will of another. So should we, being led by the Spirit, move on in the world with a motion which comes from God; following His star, submitting our wills to the will of God, and leaving Him in all things to order our paths. God meets us in the plain path or way of duty, whilst we should be glad to make an eccentric orbit in order to find Him.

VI. *The standing still of the star.*—"It came and stood over where the young child was."

Firstly. When we look at the moon with its beams falling upon the roof of our house, it appears to stand directly over our heads, and the same appearance is noted by those who may be gazing at it hundreds of miles away from us. So this star, had it remained in the sky, would have seemed to be standing over many places at the same time; but it descended, to show the exact spot where the Infant Saviour lay. (Theo.) So does the Star of Grace condescend to the weak estate of man's nature; it not only shines in the heavens, pointing out the sublimities of glory to immortal natures, but it also descends to earth, and shines over its dark places, hovering over benighted and sin-defiled souls. The Star of Grace is a star of mercy as well as of guidance, since it teaches us not to mind high things always, but also sometimes to condescend to men [and things] of low estate." (Rom. xii. 16.)

Secondly. By this star remaining over the house, is signified the stability and certainty of God's grace and promises. A fixed position implies stability. This Star of Grace shining in upon the soul makes it stable. For (1) It

unites it with One Who is absolutely One, and Who is the source of all firmness, even God Himself. It joins the soul with the Undivided One.

(2) It also unites the soul with the Eternal One, with our King immortal and eternal, with Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. (S. Jam. i. 17.) Of a soul so united it may be said, "He will rest in His love" (Zeph. iii. 17); that is, so remain and repose in it, that no change can really happen to harm, for this is the one secure resting-place for life and for death. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee." (Isa. xxvi. 3.)

(3) It also joins the soul with the absolutely Perfect. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father Which is in heaven is perfect." (S. Matt. v. 48.) A sense of imperfection ever makes us unstable; we long for something better, and so we are ever moving onwards from one object to another; but when once we have reached perfection we feel that stability is ours, and all our labour is ended.

(4) It unites us with the end of all our desires. The star standing still, pointed out the object for which the wise men had undertaken so long a journey; and so when we, by the

Star of Grace, are led to Jesus, He will be seen without limit, He will be loved without satiety, and He will be praised without fatigue.

Walking by faith, in humility and obedience, may we follow the guiding of this Star of Grace here, that we may be received into glory hereafter.

THE EPIPHANY.

SERMON II.

THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST.

“When Herod the king heard these things he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.”—*S. Matt.* ii. 3.

I. *The reason why Herod was troubled.*—When the three wise men, having been led by the star, had come to Jerusalem, and with earnest inquiry had asked, “Where is He that is born King of the Jews?” behold, a great marvel. King Herod and all the city were thrown into a state of consternation. “He was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.” What was the cause of so great terror and alarm? Was it Jesus Christ Who was to be feared; an infant, and not yet even a full-grown man? One not armed, but defenceless and weak? not seated upon a throne, but lying in a manger? not uttering His thunder, but crying like a young child? Was the mere presence of this lowly innocent Babe sufficient to strike wonder and

dismay into the hearts of a ruler and all the people of his city? To fill both king and people with a certain nameless dread of they knew not what? To awaken within them an awe that they could not define? It was indeed so; the very presence of the Infant Saviour was an august presence, in which poverty, weakness, and subjection veiled an infinity of riches, strength, and universal dominion. S. Augustine in his own peculiar and powerful manner draws a powerful contrast from this fact, so singular, so inexplicable. He asks, "What will be the majesty of His tribunal at the judgment, when the cradle of the Infant was sufficient to terrify proud kings?"

Come then, brethren, and let us behold in this cradle, before which the Magi bowed down in adoration, and offered their prophetic gifts, the throne of Him Who is about to judge the quick and the dead; and let us dwell upon the consideration how severe a Judge they will one day have, who have with them now this same Jesus Christ as a loving infant, and yet are unwilling to adore Him in company with the wise men. "What will be the majesty of His tribunal, when the cradle of the Infant was sufficient to terrify proud kings?" If the lofty ones of the earth were stricken by the green

tree, how shall they not be affrighted most grievously by the dry?

II. *He Whom we now offend will one day be our Judge.*—The fatal day of judgment will come, O Christian! it will come, whether thou wilt or wilt not: the day in which, if thou hast seen the sun rise, thou shalt not see it set. The hour will come in which the soul rent from the body will go forth. And whither will it go? Even to that Divine tribunal, before which every action of our lives will be most closely and severely examined; it will have to pass in review before His sight, Who, although as on this day He appears as a gentle Infant, sweet and loving, will there be seen as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, before Whom the highest prodigies of holiness will tremble and pale with fear; and what is the most terrible thought of all, we shall have Him for our Judge Whom once we have harmed with a thousand injuries. O terrible lot! O fear inexplicable! When He was as one weak we slighted His love, we disregarded His most earnest wishes. In our sad wilfulness we played the strong man, as it were, off against His feebleness. But now that He is come in all the greatness of His power and dominion, our consciences are filled with a terror as great

as it is just. A recompence must be made to His offended majesty.

III. *A Scriptural illustration of this fear.*—

When the sons of Jacob the patriarch came into Egypt a second time to buy corn, Joseph “commanded the steward of his house, saying, Put my cup, the silver cup, in the sack’s mouth of the youngest, and his corn money.” (Gen. xlv. 2.) Then he had them brought back to Egypt, and convicted of theft; and after some conversation, “Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live?” (Gen. xlv. 3.) There was no joy to his brethren at this announcement; they were not delighted that the blood of the lost Joseph did not lay upon their souls. “His brethren did not answer him, for they were troubled at his presence.” What fear ye, O brethren? Come, rush to his embrace! behold! he whom you see face to face is your brother! They grew pale with astonishment; they were frightened at the voice of Joseph. Why at his voice? A consciousness of the great wickedness which they had committed against him was the cause of this their great fear: the old persecutions which they had plotted against Joseph to take away his life came into their minds in a moment. Yet there was something besides

this memory of past sin against him ; something greater than this which rendered these brethren of his so very much afraid. What was this greater ground for dread ? It was because they knew and felt that this brother whom they had formerly sold was now their judge, and that unlimited power was in his hands for the avenging of his former injuries. It was this reflection that caused the men to lose all heart, and to tremble with fear ; they realized the fact that they had altogether fallen into the power of their justly angered and injured brother. Although a craven fear ever accompanies the wicked, it is most keenly felt when the injured, having now become strong, has the injurer brought into his presence, knowing that he has the full power to make mention of, and to punish, the former sins against him. From this feeling of the brethren in the presence of Joseph, you can conceive, O sinner, with what great terror thou wilt be stricken when thou art brought into the presence of the Divine Judge, and shalt hear Him saying unto thee, I am Jesus, Whom thou hast afflicted with an infinite number of reproaches. I am Jesus, whose warnings and inspirations thou hast neglected ; I am Jesus, Whom thou by thy sins hast again nailed to the

cross. O how, trembling, blushing, and full of fear and of shame, wilt thou stand before Him !

The prophets of old treat the sins of idolatry and disobedience as a kind of spiritual adultery. And as a faithless wife would fear the withering glance of a justly angered husband, so will the sinful soul, if faithless to God, feel before Him one day. God has said to the soul, "I will betroth thee unto Me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto Me in faithfulness" (Hos. ii. 19, 20), and then these betrothed souls "committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses." (Jer. v. 7.) It will be the one great complaint against the elect soul in that day that, "as a wife that committeth adultery, thou gavest thy gifts to all thy lovers." (Ezek. xvi. 32, 33.)

O Christian soul, I return to thee. Dost thou not remember that in the sacred laver of Baptism thou wert betrothed to the Incarnate Son of God? Dost thou not remember also that often thou hast most shamefully broken this covenant? Behold, He, the Lord, will be thy Judge; He whom thou hast forsaken in

order to go after the loves of this world, for the doing of which things thou wilt indeed be brought into bitterness when that terrible voice shall be sounded in thine ear which will cite thee before the tribunal of His justly offended majesty. "Behold the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." (S. Matt. xxv. 6.) The Holy Gospel does not say, Behold, the King of kings cometh, or behold, the Judge of all; but "Behold the bridegroom," the loves of Whom thou hast eluded by a wanton counterfeit. At the last day the very person of Jesus Christ as the Bridegroom will carry dismay into the souls of many who have, during their time of probation, been unfaithful to that baptismal covenant by which they were bound to His true love and service.

IV. *The person of our Blessed Lord a cause of fear.*—Although our dear Lord was most careful to veil His divinity during His ministration amongst men, yet there was something in His very person when He willed that it should be so, that struck terror into the hearts of those who were opposed to Him.

Firstly. When the "band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees" came to take the Lord after His agony in the garden, they were stricken down by His very

person. "As soon as He had said unto them, I am He, they went backward and fell to the ground" (S: John xviii. 6), just as if they had been smitten with lightning. What will not our Blessed Lord do when He shall come to judge the quick and the dead, if when He came to be judged with a word He had power to smite down His enemies in a moment? The person of Jesus Christ when presented to these men, who were sent to apprehend Him, of Himself was more than they were able to endure.

Secondly. The person of Jesus Christ, which was adored by the Magi to-day, exerted its power in the case of the conversion of S. Paul. Saul, "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord," and full of anger and burning zeal against the rising Church, sought to root it up and exterminate it in its cradle. Jesus Christ meets him on his way to Damascus. He was felled to the earth by the person of the Lord appearing to him, and saying, "I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest." (Acts ix. 5.) These simple words seemed as thunder to Saul; they smote him half dead from his horse, and he lay on the ground for some time more dead than alive. If there is such great power in the person and

words of Jesus Christ, when with loving words He calls man to repentance, how great will be the terror when, in the person of the Judge and with words of justice, He cites us to the tribunal of judgment? "They who cannot endure the clemency of the Lord, how will they be able to bear His anger? They who are terror-stricken by His calling them to repentance, how will they be able to sustain Him filling all things with terror?" (Eseb. Emis.)

V. *The person of Jesus Christ will be terrible at the judgment.*—It is very easy for you, O sinner, from what has been said, to imagine what your own dread and confusion will be when you shall hear the Son of God saying from His judgment-seat, I am Jesus, thy Redeemer, whose most holy law thou hast trodden under foot, Whose love thou hast scorned, Whom thou hast most grievously offended. Whilst thou livedst upon earth I was thy pleader and thy teacher, but now I have become thy Judge; then verily I was silent, I patiently endured all injuries, but now I avenge them, "for the day of vengeance is in My heart." (Isa. lxiii. 4.)

O dreadful lot! What can I do? Whither can my wicked soul flee when it shall behold

the Son of God, not as a friend, not as a Bridegroom, not as a Lamb, but as an enemy, as a judge, as one delivering the sentence of everlasting damnation?

VI. *The lessons of the Epiphany.*—Firstly. We should adore Jesus Christ by offering to Him our lives. Thou, O Christian soul, that thou mayest escape so terrible an issue of events, do thou bow the knee as a suppliant to the person of the Divine Child. Come with the Magi and offer thy gifts, not indeed of gold, of frankincense, of myrrh, or indeed of any material oblation; but offer to the person of Jesus Christ thy memory, thy will, and thy understanding; subject these powers of the mind wholly to the Divine law, and so it shall come to pass that, worshipping the person of our dear Lord to-day as a Divine Infant, hereafter thou shalt not have cause to fear that glorious Presence and Person when in all His tremendous majesty He shall appear to thee as thou art brought before His awful judgment-seat. And whilst thou art worshipping Him as thy God, thou wilt find that He will graciously draw nigh unto thee; He will cause thee to love Him as a most dear friend, drawing thee with the cords of a man and the bands of love (Hos. xi. 4); He will make an

Epiphany of Himself to thy soul, for He will reveal Himself to thee as thy comforter, as thy helper and thy sustainer.

Secondly. We should make a special offering at the Holy Communion. Each communion that we make should bring this day's festival before us. We should come before our King, Whose majesty is hidden under the lowly forms of bread and wine, just as the Magi did Him reverence when His divinity was hidden under the guise of infancy. To the infant the Magi brought their offerings, all symbolical as they were of His future kingdoms of suffering, mediation, and power. We also should make our oblations when we come into His Sacramental presence. For gold, we bring a pure and an unalloyed love, which is golden in its purity, in its strength, in its endurance under temptation. For frankincense, we make an offering of joy, a continual and living sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. For myrrh, a broken and contrite heart, a soul that is crucified with Himself. (Pet. Bless.)

If the person of Jesus Christ be loved by us in this life, it will be still more loved, worshipped, and adored by us when that great feast of the Epiphany shall be cele-

brated in heaven, when we shall know even as we are known, and when we shall be made like Him, because we shall see Him as He is.

THE CONVERSION OF S. PAUL.

THE FORSAKEN WORLD.

“Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed Thee.”—S.
Matt. xix. 27.

As it was with S. Peter and those other Apostles who were called by our Blessed Lord during His human ministry, so was it also with S. Paul, who was called supernaturally by Jesus Christ after His earthly work was ended: in both cases the world was to be forsaken if Jesus was to be followed. A contempt of the world must ever accompany a sincere following Jesus Christ.

Men naturally desire riches, pleasures, and honours, and therefore S. John testifies against the corruption of riches, the baseness of pleasures, the vanity of honours: warning men and saying “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world,” adding the reason for the prohibition—“All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the

pride of life, is not of the Father." (1 S. John ii. 15, 16.)

The Christian should learn to despise the world because of its nature, its sin, and its punishments; and this is the lesson which this day's festival so strikingly teaches us.

I. *The world is to be forsaken on account of its treachery.*—Firstly. The *riches* of the world are to be forsaken for three reasons: In the first place, for the labour of their acquisition. The world is ever a traitor; it promises rest when riches are gained, and yet it afterwards torments its lovers, by labour, cares, and anxieties, and sometimes worries them even to death itself. Of the rich, the Wise Man says, "All his days are sorrows and his travail grief" (Eccles. ii. 23); hence his advice, "Labour not to be rich." (Prov. xxiii. 4.) Our Blessed Lord spake the Parable of the rich man and his sudden death (S. Luke xii. 16-21), to warn us against trusting to the quiet and rest of wealth.

In the second place, for the fear and anxiety which is caused by their possession. Riches promise security, yet how can the world guarantee this, encompassed as it is with wars, famines, and the convulsions of nature? The rich man is in daily peril from other kingdoms,

whether he be in the city or in solitude; from the ocean; from false friends. "That rich man whom you so envy and deem to be so happy, believe me, he often grieves and sighs. Many wait upon him; true, but flies follow the honey, wolves the corpses, ants the grain: the many follow the riches, yet not the man." (Seneca.) The rich man has often just cause to fear violence or craft; he is often both weak and bitter, because oppressed with cares for the present, and anxious about the future, he is not able to rest in present blessings, since he is ever fearing impending ills.

In the third place, for the sorrow that it will be to part with his riches. The world may indeed promise a long tenure of possession; yet, O how great is the grief when riches are lost, when the greater portion of them even is taken away, and when they are to be parted with for ever. "The stout-hearted are spoiled; they have slept their sleep, and none of the men of might have found their hands." (Ps. lxxvi. 5.) "There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is common among men, a man to whom God hath given riches and wealth and honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof." (Eccles. vi. 2.)

Secondly, the *pleasures* of the world are to be forsaken for three reasons. In the first place, they ever deceive, since they promise satisfaction, and they yield a craving. "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again." (S. John iv. 13.) The fly often falls into the one desired dish; in this world most rarely does a perfect good fortune happen to a man. Grant that some one abounds in wealth; his lowly origin spoils his enjoyment of it: the fly has fallen there. Another with gentle blood is weighed down by poverty, so that he wishes to be in retirement rather than in public; the fly has fallen there. Another is blessed with both wealth and family, but he is childless—his possessions are accumulating for a distant heir; the fly has fallen there. So it is with all things; even marriage oftentimes gives rise to quarrels and the greatest unhappiness; the fly has fallen into the nuptial cup.

In the second place, they produce a loathing where they promised delight. Delicate foods often cause sickness, and so the pleasures of the world frequently end in disgust. "I said in mine heart, enjoy pleasure; and behold this also is vanity." (Eccles. ii. 1.)

In the third place, they soon pass away, although they promised to remain. "The

world passeth away and the lust thereof." (1 S. John ii. 17.) The pleasures of the world are as fleeting as vapour, foam, or shadows. "Awake, ye drunkards, and weep, and howl, all ye drinkers of wine, for it is cut off from your mouth." (Joel i. 5.) Such drunkards of pleasure are given to sensuality and vanity; they intoxicate themselves with the cup of Babylon, and the wine of pleasure is cut off from their mouth, for it perishes even before they have taken their fill of it. The wine of pleasure fails, even when it giveth colour in the glass containing it (Prov. xxiii. 31), for the glass, a true emblem of life, is brittle, and is soon broken, and then the wine of pleasure is all spilled. "Woe to them that lie upon beds of ivory; that chant to the sound of the viol." (Amos vi. 1, 4, 5.) The pleasures and life of man are but as grass, as "in the morning" of youthful pleasure they "flourish and grow up," but "in the evening" of old age, they "are cut down and wither." (Ps. xc. 5, 6.) After our Blessed Lord had preached in Jerusalem all the day long, in that city which received Him with so much pomp in the morning, there was no one found to give Him even a drop of water; and so when the even was come, He "left them and went out of the city

into Bethany." (S. Matt. xxi. 17.) Weary and hungry, he retired from Jerusalem to teach men how traitorous the world was in its pleasures, and how they are to be despised by the true Christian.

Thirdly, *the magnificence* of the world is to be forsaken. In the first place, it leads to servitude whilst promising liberty. Oh, how many rulers and exalted persons are in absolute subjection to their own dependents. "He is lower than a slave who fears slaves." (Senec.) Our Blessed Lord made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem "sitting upon an ass," (S. Matt. xxi. 7), afflicted and dishonoured, that He might openly show the true nature of worldly grandeur; for as the vainglorious seek to rule over many, so necessary was it for Him to proclaim that He was the servant of many. There is a dishonouring, even by the very honours themselves, for the honoured are often despised by the vilest persons; they become "a reproach of men and despised of the people." (Ps. xxii. 6.) To trust in the magnificence of the world is to "trust in the shadow of Egypt," which will be "confusion." (Isai. xxx. 3.)

In the second place, it leads to sorrow. Although this magnificence promises joy and rejoicing, since the world bids its great ones

sing "with the timbrel and dance with stringed instruments and organs" (Ps. cl. 4.), yet how many hidden griefs, sorrows, and distresses lie in the souls of those who so rejoice; for "even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is sadness." (Prov. xiv. 13.)

In the third place, it leads to fear and danger, although it promises security. The world says, aim high, for the higher your station the more secure you will be, and yet the higher it raises a man the more it torments him, and agonizes him with fear; "a dreadful sound is in his ears." (Job xv. 2.) "It is worse with the masters than with the servants; the former fear all men, the latter their own masters only." (Seneca.) The world is somewhat like Judas; it betrays its master with the kiss of tranquillity and peace into the hands of the enemy, saying, "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he, hold him fast." (S. Matt. xxvi. 43.) Whilst the people were shouting, "Blessed is the King of Israel," the Pharisees consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death" (S. John xii. 13, 10), "also," as well as Jesus Christ.

II. *The world is to be forsaken for its guilt.*—Firstly, *the riches* of the world are *guilty*. For in the first place, they blind the understanding, by taking the mind away from God, and fixing

it on the world. Of such souls it is written, "The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty." (Ps. xxxiv. 20.) These souls are "dark" because they are blinded by their "habitations" and earthly possessions; and such as dwell in these habitations "have set their eyes bowing down to the earth." (Ps. xvii. 11.)

In the second place, they defile the affections. Leading the soul (1) to pride, for the rich "trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches." (Ps. xlix. 6.) (2) To anger, as in the strife between Abraham and Lot, who had "flocks, and herds, and tents." (Gen. xiii. 5.) (3) To envy: he that hasteth to be rich hath an evil [an envious] eye." (Prov. xxviii. 22.) (4) To sloth: "Moab hath been at ease [rich] from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees." (Jer. xlvi. 11.) (5) To gluttony, since the rich man "fared sumptuously every day." (S. Luke xvi. 19.) (6) To sensuality: "when I fed them to the full, they then committed adultery." (Jer. v. 7.) (7) To covetousness: "he that toucheth pitch shall be defiled with it." (Ecclus. xiii. 1); and money is as pitch to those who love it.

In the third place, they lead the memory to forgetfulness of God. Ephraim and Manasseh

were brethren, the sons of Joseph, born in Egypt. (Gen. xlvi. 20.) Ephraim signifies fruitful, or increasing, and represents riches; and Manasseh, forgetfulness; so in the two brethren, fruitfulness and forgetfulness go hand in hand; and it is written of them, "They were filled, and their head was exalted; therefore have they forgotten Me." (Hos. xiii. 6.)

Secondly, *the pleasures* of the world are *guilty*. For in the first place, they lead to a sinful inclination. Pleasure ever weakens; it enervates the mental powers. We read "Dan shall leap from Basan." (Deut. xxxiii. 22). Dan is the cause or occasion, and Basan is fatness; since from the occasion which pleasures and temporal prosperity give to sin, man chiefly leads or glides down into sin; and he is easily led along that broad way "that leadeth to destruction." (S. Matt. vii. 16.)

In the second place, they lead to sensual sin. By excess of pleasure, both the soul and body are destroyed, just as the wheat is by an excess of rain. "This was the iniquity of thy sister, Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and her daughters." (Ezek. xvi. 49.)

In the third place they lead to insensibility. Man becomes as insensible as the brutes by

living in much pleasure, having neither understanding, nor grace, nor sense of shame, nor hope in any of the promises of eternal good things, nor dread of future punishment. Those given up to pleasure neither fear God nor honour man. "The natural [sensual, Vulg.] man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor. ii. 14.) Such as these, despise all inspiration, all correction, all preaching; they are both insensible, and despisers of the words of God and of His gifts. "I spake unto thee in thy prosperity, but thou saidst I will not hear." (Jer. xxii. 21.)

Thirdly. *The magnificence* of the world is *guilty*. In the first place it leads to distraction, through influencing the understanding. Minds which are not braced by many graces soon fall, under the various distractions of temporal prosperity. They are led astray by the flatterers who surround them, for few venture to speak the truth to very great people, of whom it is written, "Memphis shall bury them." (Hos. ix. 6.) "Memphis" signifies that which proceeds out of the mouth, and hence it represents "flattery."

In the second place it leads to inebriation,

affecting the will by puffing up the mind, as if by strong drink. Such "mount up to the heaven" by their glory and honour; "they go down again to the depths" by the multiplying of their heavy sins. The reason for this is given. "Their soul is melted because of trouble." (Ps. cvi. 26.) Their natural moral and spiritual natures are defiled; "they are at their wits' end." (Id. ver. 27.)

In the third place it leads to infatuation, affecting the memory. "Man that is in honour and understandeth not" what he was, is, and shall be, "is like the beasts that perish." (Ps. xlix. 20.) He is infatuated and led by the senses. Such are they "whose God is their belly, who mind earthly things." (Phil. iii. 19.) "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh." (Rom. viii. 35.)

III. *The world is to be forsaken because of the present punishment which awaits its following.*—Firstly. The spiritual punishment of *impurity*. "I sink in deep mire." (Ps. lxix. 2.) The body when defiled can be cleansed by water, by swimming, bathing, and the like; but the soul cannot in this way be cleansed from its sin. The sinner exclaims, "I sink in mire," in clay of earthly affections. This mire is (1) tenacious in its avarice, (2) it is base in

its sensuality, and (3) it is sterile in its pride. "Fear and the pit and the snare are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth. And it shall come to pass that he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit, and he that cometh out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare." (Isa. xxiv. 17, 18.) Riches bring fear; they suspect a robber in the poor man, and a plunderer in the rich. The "pit" signifies sensuality; "a strange woman is a narrow pit." (Prov. xxiii. 27.) "The snare" is pride, for as snares capture the birds, so does pride those who, being winged by their own greatness, fly aloft. Many who escape both avarice and sensuality are taken at last "in the snare" of pride.

Secondly. The spiritual punishment of *blindness*. "I sink in the deep mire;" the word "deep" is added to show how darkened is the conscience of those who are defiled by the mire of the love of this world. In the first place, it is "deep" as being blinded. Though God of His mercy does not cease to infuse light into the soul, yet as the sun although risen does not shine when it is cloudy, so the light of truth cannot shine in a soul which is darkened by inordinate worldly affection. In the second place, it is "deep" as being made

bitter. "Hast thou entered into the springs [or deep] of the sea?" (Job xxxviii. 16); that is, into a conscience embittered by sins. No; for sin generates an impiety or malignity of will. In the third place it is desperate; it gives no hope of escape: "When the wicked cometh, then cometh also contempt" (Prov. xviii. 3); or of any resurrection to righteousness, or of any amendment of life. "And with ignominy reproach," as never rising, and therefore being eternally condemned. "Let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave. Let the lying lips be put to silence." (Ps. xxxi. 17, 18.)

Thirdly. The spiritual punishment of *weakness*. "Where there is no water" (Ps. lxix. 2); this indicates a state of perpetual sinking lower and lower, without help and without refreshment. The sinner is weakened by three circumstances of his walk in life. In the first place, "let their way be dark" (Ps. xxxv. 6); dark by the black night of ignorance. "They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness." (Ps. lxxxii. 5.) In the second, "and slippery" (Ps. xxxv. 6); no hold either for the steps of the heart or conscience in the way of sin. In the third place, "let the angel of the Lord persecute them" (Ps. xxxv. 6),

or follow them. Their path is dark and slippery, and the Lord's avenging messenger is behind them, who can but fear? The devil is this angel, who, whether willing or unwilling, is subject to the rule of the Lord in following up sinners, and chasing them down to hell. The way is a slippery one for sinners, leading them quickly to their destruction. As the shepherd follows his sheep, staying them or sending them onwards, and leading them at length to the fold, so is the devil the shepherd of lost souls. In his anguish the sinner cries out against him; "He hath led me and brought me into darkness, not into light. Surely against me is he turned; he turneth his hand against me all the day long." (Lam. iii. 2, 3.)

Let us learn then with S. Paul to forsake this treacherous, sinful, punishable world. "Behold, with how many misfortunes God hath filled it! Behold, it is bitter and yet it is loved! Behold, it is ruined and yet it is inhabited! What should we do if it was enduring and lovely? O world impure, and bringing forth darkness! If transient glory so retainest us, what wouldst thou not do if thou abidest for ever?" (S. Aug.)

THE FEAST OF THE PURIFICATION.

THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD.

“The Lord Whom ye seek shall suddenly come to His temple.”—*Mal. iii. 1.*

I. *The mystery of the Presentation in the Temple.*

—In the first place, the mystery of the present solemnity was prefigured by the presentation of Samuel to the Lord in the tabernacle at Shiloh by his mother Hannah, who was herself a remarkable type of the Virgin Mary. It was by the divine grace, which she had obtained in answer to her earnest prayers, that her son was given unto her, the high priest also interceding for her; “the God of Israel grant thee thy petition.” (1 Sam. i. 17.) Samuel in very many particulars was a wonderful type of our Blessed Lord, since he was a prophet, a judge of the people, one who prayed for those who cast him away after years of faithful service. “Hearken unto the voice of the people, for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected

Me" (1 Sam. viii. 7), when they desired to have a king.

In the second place, the mystery of to-day was foretold by the prophets, as is evident from the Epistle, in which we read how eagerly this presentation was longed for by the ancient fathers, every line of which breathes an ardour of expectation. "Learn, my brethren, how great was the desire of the saints of old to see Jesus Christ. They knew that He would come one day, and those whose lives agreed with this expectation made it the subject of their daily prayer. O would that this great nativity might happen with me now. O that I might behold with my eyes that which I believe in the Scriptures of God." (S. Aug.) Hence our Blessed Lord said to His disciples, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see : for I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them." (S. Luke x. 23, 24.) It was indeed a long time of waiting whilst the fulfilment of the promise was slowly approaching its realization. To many it must have seemed as if "the fulness of time" would never come, so many were the generations of men who, having lived in faith, and "saluted the promise afar off," were gathered to their fathers

ere it was accomplished. Many were tempted to say of our Blessed Lord's first coming, as the early Christians said of His second Advent, "Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." (2 S. Pet. iii. 4.) The prophet pleads alike with the children of the old or the new dispensation: "Though It tarry wait for it, because it will surely come." (Habak. ii. 3.) "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." (Isa. xxvi. 9.)

In the third place, for this mystery which was revealed to-day we ought rightly to rejoice and to offer our thanksgivings to God. For it would be a grave dishonour, and a sad sign of our sluggishness, that we, supine and inactive, should not desire that benefit of which the holy fathers of old so ardently longed to be partakers.

II. *The Acts of the Presentation in the Temple.*
—Each act of this Presentation has a spiritual significance, but there are three especially important circumstances concerning it to which our attention will be confined on the present occasion.

Firstly. Our Blessed Lord was presented in the Temple after His Circumcision. What is the signification of this order of events? Our Blessed Lord by rising again from the dead triumphed over all the corruptions of the flesh; and when, after an interval of forty days, He with His immortal flesh ascended into heaven, then was an entrance made into the temple of the heavenly Jerusalem, and He was presented to the Divine vision. So we who are circumcised from sin by Baptism are presented afterwards into the temple wherein is consecrated the host of the Lord's Body and Blood, the grace of God increasing within us. Lastly, at the end of the world, the whole Church of the blessed, having been circumcised from the corruption of the flesh by the resurrection of the body, will be presented into the temple of heavenly glory, wherein God will be praised for ever and ever. So the presentation of the lowly child into the Temple made with hands to-day, is an earnest and a pledge of our own presentation one day into the eternal temple of glory, whose builder and maker is God.

Secondly. There was a solemn and devout procession into the Temple of four venerable and holy persons. Mary and Joseph offer the sacrifice which was commanded by the law,

and with it the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, and Simeon and Anna receive the Holy Child Jesus. From these four holy persons is that procession celebrated which, throughout the four quarters of the globe, is to-day with august rejoicings recalled to the memory. It is our duty then to observe the things which were done by those who went into the Temple to-day. Firstly, that we ought to go "to the house of God in company," in pairs; that is, to have brotherly charity amongst us; and this was what our Blessed Lord taught us by sending His seventy disciples forth "two and two," so as to commend mutual love and the social life.

Moreover, there was an old custom of holding candles in the hands, which represented the splendour of good works, even as our Blessed Lord commanded: "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning." (S. Luke xii. 35.) Those are the "lights" which are kindled by that divine light and fire of which our Lord spake, saying, "I am come to send fire on the earth." (S. Luke xii. 49.) Opposed to the light of this fire of love and grace is that fire of concupiscence, of lust, and of sin, which the enemy of souls is ever ready to kindle, that by it he may slowly but surely consume all that is

good and holy in the soul, and so ensure the condemnation of his victim to that "lake of fire" which is the second death. (Rev. xx. 14.) Now if any presume to offer this "strange fire before the Lord, there shall go out fire from the Lord," and shall devour him (Lev. x. 1, 2), even as it happened to Nadab and Abihu.

Thirdly. The offering or presentation of the Holy Child Jesus was made in the Temple to-day. But this oblation, beloved, seems to be sufficiently gentle when it is there placed before the Lord; it is adorned with birds, "a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons" (S. Luke ii. 24), and forthwith it is brought back again. The time will come, when He will again be offered or presented to the Lord, not in the Temple within the city in the arms of Simeon, but without the city on the arms of the cross. The time will come when He shall not be redeemed by any other offering, but when He will redeem others by His own blood, for God the Father sent His Son to be a redemption for the people. That sacrifice will be an evening one, as this was a morning offering; the latter is indeed the more joyous, but the former will be the more full. Jesus Christ offered Himself. Who art thou that delayest to offer thyself? What does He render to me that so great

majesty may deign to receive my oblation? I have two small gifts, O Lord, and only two, my body and my soul. Would that I were able to offer these to Thee, O Saviour, absolutely and perfectly, for a sacrifice of praise.

III. *The preparation of the temple of the heart.*—That our dear Lord may come and be presented in the temple of the heart, three conditions are absolutely necessary.

Firstly, that the soul be *pure*, being cleansed from sin. Our Blessed Lord will flee out of a defiled house. Do you think, because Moses was about to pronounce a woman unclean after child-bearing, that he did not fear to incur the charge of blasphemy against the mother of the Lord, therefore he prefixed this condition to his law “if a woman have conceived seed?” (Lev. xii. 2.) Otherwise, unless he had foreseen that a virgin should bear a son without seed, what need was there for him to have introduced so remarkable an expression? Verily, O Blessed Virgin, thou hast no cause, neither to thee was there any need for purification. But was there any need of circumcision for thy dear Son? Thou wert amongst women as one of them, since thy son was also enrolled amongst the number of children. He willed to be circumcised, and with a more ardent

longing did He desire to be offered on the Cross.

Secondly, that the soul burn with ardent *love*. In holy Simeon the affection towards God was so strong, that daily during all the many years of his life he had asked in prayer that he might see Jesus Christ. Yet this vision of the Infant Saviour was not vouchsafed to Simeon until he was a very old man ; it was granted as to one desiring and yearning after it ; to one saying in daily prayer, " O when will He come ? When will He be born ? When shall I see Him ? Dost thou think that this birth will ever find me ? Dost thou think that these eyes will see Him, by which the eyes of the soul will be revealed ? " Saying this, and feeling more than this in his prayers, he received as an answer to his great desire the promise " that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ." (S. Luke ii. 26.) It is ever so. An earnest and hearty desire, when it is set upon a proper or a holy object, is not all loss ; is never wholly thrown away ; if it be not so pure as Simeon's was, and therefore be not so perfectly fulfilled, in part it may be realized, and so bring a large measure of hope and comfort with it. Such yearning as this betokens an earnest nature, and there is no true earnest-

ness but what gains some reward in the end. It is only the cold, half-hearted Sadducean mind, that neither sows in hope nor reaps in joy. From which disposition may God in His mercy preserve us.

Thirdly, that the soul be *obedient* towards God. Anna was most firm in her allegiance to God's service, since she "departed not from the temple, but served God with fasting and prayers night and day." (S. Luke i. 37.) This holy woman was a singular example of devoted service; at the age of eighty-four years she did not relax her spiritual duties, but was occupied at all times with fasting and prayer. This great holiness of life caused Anna to shine with a clear prophetic spirit as she "spoke of Him to all that looked for redemption in Jerusalem," and was enabled to give her testimony to the Advent of Jesus Christ, which was now completed. A greater honour still was hers; her heart was gladdened by His presence in the Flesh, whom she now recognised as the long-expected Messiah. Like Simeon, she had her reward.

IV. *The Lesson of the Presentation.*—Let us then carefully regard these examples which the Holy Gospel for to-day brings before us; and as good children, and well affected towards our

heavenly Father, let us gladly and frequently be found in His house, in the temple of the Lord. Faithful children and they who love their parents, delight whenever it is possible to abide in their father's home; they prefer the paternal roof to any other dwelling, how grand so ever it may be. The Psalmist, when unfolding this spiritual affection, said: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple." (Ps. xxvii. 4.) "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." (Ps. xxiii. 6.) It is this "house of the Lord" of which the prophet Isaiah speaks: "Mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people." (Isa. xvi. 7.)

Let it be our aim and purpose to daily visit and frequent this house of God, and to offer up in it our fervent prayers and our sincere worship, that at length we may be deemed worthy to attain unto His perpetual and supernal house, and there with its holy dwellers and inhabitants to praise Him for ever and ever.

S. MATTHIAS'S DAY.

THE BLESSED LOT.

“The lot fell upon Matthias.”—*Acts* i. 26.

I. *The dignity of this lot.*—In early times it was the custom to consult auguries, and to determine the issue of important events by lot. To cast lots was held to be a legitimate mode of testing, within certain limits, the secrets of the providence of God. Our word clergy, which means lot, tells us that originally every priest was called to fulfil the sacred office exactly as the vacant place of Judas was filled up by the election of Matthias. Offenders were often discovered by the lot falling upon them: such were Achan (*Josh.* vii. 8) and Jonah.

Surely we can feel some sympathy for S. Matthias, at this, the most critical moment of his history; and estimate with him the greatness of the dignity to which this election

raised him. He was admitted into the college of the heavenly peers, who are the apostles and disciples of Jesus Christ. This was a dignity which knows no rival, and which yields its precedence to none other.

There is also another reason why this lot was the sign or mark of great distinction, for the lot which was beheld by the eyes of the disciples was but an outward expression of that eternal election, by which God had chosen S. Matthias to the apostolate. As God surely appointed S. Matthias to this grade of dignity before the lots were cast, even before the world was made, the outward lot did but declare the invisible lot of God—His invisible election. “He whom predestination had elected, He perfected.” (Just.) Yet in His elections, God ever has respect to the merits of those whom He chooses; and S. Matthias was made fit to receive so important a calling by the united prayers of the one hundred and twenty disciples. A unity of purpose was established between heaven and earth, so that the previous decree of heaven was but confirmed by the lot upon earth. “The lot is [by man] cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.” (Prov. xvi. 33.)

II. *The happiness of that lot.*—Happiness

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very often does not accompany dignity; but in this case of S. Matthias the dignity and the happiness go hand in hand, since our dear Lord had stated the relationship which should henceforth exist between His disciples and Himself. "Henceforth I call you not servants, but I have called you friends." (S. John xv. 15.) The differences between a servant and a friend are great and essential. Alexander the Great pointed this out one day, when he was asked which of two of his followers he loved the best, by his answer—"Ephestion loves Alexander, Craterus the king." The former was the friend—he was one in heart with the person of Alexander; the latter was but the servant of the king. Our Blessed Lord made each of these disciples to be as "His own self;" to suffer with Him; to die for Him; to be glorified together with Him. The mind that was in these apostles was the mind of Jesus Christ. Theophrastus, the philosopher, seeing one day a rich and a poor man walking together, asked who they might be. When he was told that they were most intimate friends, he exclaimed: "How can that be? for how can one be rich and the other poor, since the possessions of friends are common?" This community of gifts and affection was

what our Blessed Lord condescended to bestow upon His "friends:" henceforth there were to be no secrets between them—nothing was to be hidden from them; "for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you." (S. John xv. 15.)

To be a co-heir with Jesus Christ was the lot which S. Matthias obtained to-day. The possession of a faithful, true, and sympathetic earthly friend gives more unalloyed pleasure than any other possession or acquirement which this world can grant; our own deficiencies are in part atoned for; there is a strong arm upon which we can often lean in our times of weakness; and there is a heart ever ready to beat in sympathy with our own. There is in such a friendship an element of quiet joy and rest which is most grateful to the way-worn soul of man. This, and more than this, have those who have a friend in Jesus Christ; His strength is made perfect in their weakness; His strong arm never grows weak or weary: He is indeed mighty to save; His heart is so expanded with love that their every emotion is reciprocated by Him.

III. *The enviableness of that lot.*—The other disciples and Apostles had laboured much and endured much before Matthias was called to his work and to his dignity; and a special dispen-

sation of grace connects itself with this very circumstance. In our Blessed Lord's parable, the "householder," who is God the Son, goes out "early in the morning to hire labourers into His Vineyard," for the sending of Apostles to labour in the sacred vineyard of His Church. The number of the hours of the day corresponds with the number of the Apostles, some of whom were called at the first, and others at the sixth hour of the day of grace. S. Matthias was called at the eleventh hour by our Lord coming by His spirit; and "he was numbered with the eleven Apostles." S. Chrysostom says that the "Parables of our Lord must be interpreted according to their general scope, and not as applying in every particular detail to their more extended meaning. So in this case, there can be no envy amongst God's true friends; but could it have existed, it would have made its appearance when our Lord declared to S. Matthias, "I will give unto this last even as unto thee" (S. Matt. xx. 14), for he too received his denarius or penny. "He who envies is the inferior." (Pliny.) "Envy looks to those who are better." (S. Greg. mag.). No one who is in health envies the sick; no rich person envies the poor; no one who is learned, the ignorant; no patrician envies a plebeian. Had the Apostles,

then, not been filled with charity, they would have had a manifest occasion for envy in the happy lot which fell upon Matthias: it seemed to favour him above the rest of the Apostles. They had laboured, and he had entered into their labours. We too often enter upon life with advantages which were gained for us by the talent, industry, and success of those who have gone before us.

IV. *It was a lot which gladdened Jesus Christ.*—S. John records that when our Blessed Lord spoke of the betrayal to His disciples at the Last Supper, “He was troubled in spirit” (S. John xiii. 21); He felt His soul to be weighed down with a great sorrow, but that soon after, this great grief departed from Him; the sorrow was changed into joy; His bitterness into sweetness of mind; and He immediately exclaimed, when Judas had gone out, “Now is the Son of Man glorified” (S. John xiii. 31); “as if the body even could borrow glory from the divine consolation of nature.” (S. Hil.) How was it that in so short a time trouble was changed into consolation? It may be that their Lord willed to show His disciples that joy was to follow upon sorrow. (S. Chrysost.) Yet is there a deeper meaning than this in so sudden a change of feeling. David,

speaking long before His time, saw with a prophetic eye a future period coming when he said, Then "shall all the trees of the wood rejoice." (Ps. xcvi. 12.) Was it that no winter or impetuous winds should be in that day to deprive these trees of their leaves? or was it that as from one tree of the earthly paradise arose all the miseries and afflictions which are in the world, and because all the other trees languish from the effects of that first tree; so, also, from one tree planted upon Mount Calvary, upon which hung that divine fruit of which the angel Gabriel said to Mary, "That Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (S. Luke i. 35), and from which is derived all good things; and from which tree all the joys of this world take their origin? Because now, through one of these trees—that of the Cross—they are deservedly exalted, therefore do "all the trees of the wood rejoice."

Judas was indeed an unblessed tree, which produced to the apostles bitter fruit; "and they were exceeding sorrowful." (S. Matt. xxvi. 22.) Jesus Christ, too, had anguish of soul: "He was troubled in spirit." But this trouble, however, passed away, when the Son of God viewed in vision another tree, which would in time produce the sweet and pleasant fruits of

good and holy works. S. Matthias was that tree; and he was to be the cause of joy to the apostles in his election. Jesus "was troubled," for the traitor Judas had to perish miserably; "He was glorified by the thought that a son of salvation was to be elected into his place." (S. Ambr.) So every Christian soul who is working out his election, brings joy to the loving heart of Jesus Christ; and as He can be crucified in the house of His friends, so can He be rejoiced by any of His servants, who are shining as lights in this world of sin and of sorrow.

V. *The miserable lot of the wicked.*—S. Matthias came into the place of Judas. "His bishoprick let another take." (Acts i. 20.) He who was elected into the place of Judas was "another" in his life and conversation, blessed by many graces, enriched with a holy disposition. He was a most bright mirror of holiness. "Another," as not being defiled by wilful sin; "another," not a betrayer, but a faithful martyr; "another," not a vessel of wrath but of honour; "another," who did not throw away his life in wretched despair, but who poured out his blood for his faith. S. Matthias received his election as being "another" in every sense—in blood, in friendship, and in life.

By our holy living may we make our calling and election sure, and not like wretched Judas fall away from divine grace. May our lot be "the lot of the righteous" (Ps. cxxv. 3), upon which "the rod of the wicked shall not rest." With S. Matthias we are elected now to grace, and afterwards to glory.

THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

THE GREAT LEGATION.

“The angel Gabriel was sent from God, unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin.”—*S. Luke* i. 26, 27.

I. *A great contrast.*—The thought of this high festival is that an ambassador was sent from heaven to earth; that the long separation which had divided these two principalities was now ended. The embassy which announced the coming of Him Who “in the end of the world hath appeared” (*Heb.* ix. 26), can be well compared with another embassy that was sent into this world at its beginning.

Firstly, that embassy came from hell, to lure man onward to destruction and to eternal death; but this one was from heaven, bringing with it the joyous message of eternal life.

Secondly, the ambassador who came at the beginning upon his deadly errand was the devil; the ambassador whose coming we com-

memorate to-day was a messenger of the most high God—His faithful servant, the “angel Gabriel.”

Thirdly, the first ambassador came bearing a wicked suggestion, a deceitful promise, and a lying statement; the second ambassador came and suggested a holy thought of humility and fear, and he told a glorious and mighty truth in his salutation, when he said, “thou hast found favour with God.” He gave the one promise of all promises—the one most pregnant with hope and help—“behold, thou shalt conceive.”

Fourthly, both the ambassadors came to women; but the first woman fell, and became the cause of death; the other woman receiving grace became the cause of life. The contrast is indeed a great one between Eve and Mary.

God had, between this first and last legation, sent many ambassadors to man—His angels and His prophets: yet the legation of to-day stands alone as the great legation.

II. *The Sender of the legation is the Great God.*—This embassy is so great, because the sender of it is God Himself. “The angel Gabriel was sent from God;” that is, from the whole of the ever-blessed Trinity. It needed all power of the Father to unite the Godhead with our manhood so closely that hereafter they

never could be separated. It needed the wisdom of the Son to preserve intact the virginity of the mother. Lastly, it needed the grace of God the Holy Ghost to sanctify the virgin in her conception and child-bearing, so that all might be sinless with her, and "that Holy Thing which should be born of" her should "be called the Son of God." (S. Luke i. 25.) It was indeed a great counsel at which the Blessed Trinity assembled, with all the glorious hosts of heaven around them—angel and archangel, seraphim and cherubim—to plan the salvation of a lost and fallen world, where the justice of the Father and the inspiration from the Holy Ghost were more than equalled by the love of the Son for the hopeless and the helpless. This counsel was dissolved; and time rolled on, in an order almost beyond our ken, and when at last the "fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." (Gal. iv. 4.) At this great counsel was that promise given which was fulfilled at the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary.

III. *The ambassador himself was great.*—The legation was great also, because of the great-

ness of the person who came to represent so great a King and Lord. "The angel Gabriel was sent;" and it would seem that in heaven's high court he had three particular offices.

Firstly. Gabriel stands by Almighty God, he is in His immediate presence. "I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God;" as ever seeing the face of the heavenly Father (S. Matt. xviii. 10), and as being one of the assisting princes who are standing ready to execute the higher behests of the heavenly King.

Secondly. Gabriel, which signifies "the man or strength of God," is he who is supposed to be the giver of victory in battles and the head of war, and his name gives him a right to be regarded as holding this office. Now when our Blessed Lord was about to be born, a dire war was to be waged against the world, the flesh, and the devil, and He was to triumph over the world, and so Gabriel, as the Lord's general, came both to Zechariah and to Mary. (S. Jerome.)

Thirdly. He is a revealer of secrets; for the command was given, "Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision." (Dan. viii. 16.) Behold! how great then was this ambassador. It is a high prerogative to reveal secrets, and it is a higher gift to obtain victory in battle; but

it is the highest honour of all to ever stand near to God.

IV. *The person was great to whom it was sent.*—This was, thirdly, a great legation, since the person was great to whom it was sent, which is noted by the words, “to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph.” Mary was a virgin, and yet she was espoused; so that Jesus Christ desired to be born of a virgin, and yet to be born of one who was espoused. “Our Blessed Lord willed to be born of a virgin, that He might perfect and complete His works. Now God was able to create man in four ways. Firstly, as He made Adam, with neither father and mother. Secondly, as He created our first mother Eve, from a father alone. Thirdly, with a father and mother, as we are all made. Fourthly, with a mother and no father, that by so doing He might perfect the works of God. ‘His work is perfect.’ (Deut. xxxii. 4.) She was ‘a virgin espoused,’ that our Lord might show how Mary was ever a virgin, whether in marriage or in widowhood; and by so showing, might consecrate every condition of life by holiness. We must have the twofold holiness of soul and body. It was a command to the Hebrews, ‘Thou shalt make thee fringes upon

the four quarters of thy vesture wherewith thou coverest thyself' (Deut. xxii. 12), which was to be an outward sign to all whose servants they were, just as circumcision was their own peculiar token of God's service. So when our dear Lord wished that His mother not only should be holy, but should seem to be so to all, He ordained by His divine providence that she should be 'espoused;' and this was to teach us that as we are holy, so also we should be careful to let our light shine before men." (Diez.)

V. *The cause for which the ambassador was sent was a great one.*—It involved a fourfold message.

Firstly. The angel Gabriel came that he might salute the Virgin, which he did when he said, "Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women." (S. Luke i. 28.) "When Zeuxis, the wonderful painter of antiquity, wanted to paint a representation of Juno, he had the five most beautiful virgins of the city brought to him for models, and he selected the fairest amongst these. So when Jesus Christ willed to become Incarnate, His elect mother was endowed with so much grace and wisdom above others that, as S. Jerome says, whereas 'to

other virgins grace is bestowed in part, upon Mary the whole fulness of grace was poured forth.' Yet this gift cannot be preserved by our own natural powers without the help of God, so it is added, 'the Lord is with thee.' And Asaph prays, 'Let Thy hand be upon the man of Thy right hand' (Ps. lxxx. 17); that is, let Thy help rest upon him in whom Thy grace dwells. 'So will we not go back from Thee,' but 'from strength to strength every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.'" (Ps. lxxxiv. 7.) (Diez.)

Secondly. The angel came that he might comfort the Virgin. When Mary heard the angelic salutation, "she was troubled at his saying," not from a feeling of impatience, but of modesty, of fear, and of admiration. The person of the heavenly messenger was perplexing to the Jewish maiden. The salutation itself was wonderful to her ears; it both astonished and it awed her, so Gabriel administered the words of comfort, "Fear not, Mary."

Good angels awaken fear at the beginning of their mission, they comfort us during its progress, but they fill us with joy at its end; whilst the evil spirits, who transform themselves into angels of light, strike terror at the beginning, which increases as their work goes

on, and is consummated by the extremest terror at the end.

Thirdly. Gabriel announced the conception of a great son, and this was another ground of comfort. "Behold, thou shalt conceive and bring forth a son; He shall be great" (S. Mark i. 31, 32), with a threefold greatness. Firstly, by His origin, for He "shall be called the Son of the Highest." Secondly, by His power and dominion, "to Him shall be given the throne of His father David." Thirdly, by His noble possession of subjects, "He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever;" not over the house of Esau, for He shall reign over the good and not over the wicked.

Fourthly. Gabriel promised that Mary should preserve her purity. The Blessed Virgin asked "How can this be?" (1) A son might be formed naturally, and then the virgin would have become a mother; and though she might rejoice in the nobleness of her child, she would no longer be a virgin. (2) A son might be spiritually formed, and he would in that case be great indeed, but in this greatness his human mother would have no participation. (3) A son might be formed supersubstantially and miraculously, and he would be greater than any other, and the mother would rejoice over her noble

child, and that she was, though a mother, a virgin still. It was this supersubstantial birth that Gabriel announced to the Virgin, saying, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee;" and he adds most wisely, "The power of the Highest shall overshadow thee." God is unapproachable light, "dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto." (1 S. Tim. vi. 16.) He is also "a consuming fire." (Heb. xii. 29.) He is "sweet above honey." (Ecclus. xxiv. 27.) Thus the Virgin had within her inaccessible light, inextinguishable fire, and ineffable sweetness. But if the eye, by the sight of the sun, is dazzled; if the flesh cannot bear to touch the smallest glowing cinder; if men die from excess of joy; how could the Blessed Virgin, who was so pure a creature, behold a light of such infinite brightness, endure so great a furnace of divinity, sustain a sweetness of such infinite joy? She could not have doubtless done so, had not "the power of the Highest" overshadowed her. Inaccessible light overshadowed itself with itself when it joined itself to an earthen vessel, that is to earthly flesh; and thus it was able to see light as if in a lantern. Inextinguishable and divine fire overshadowed itself with itself, because it placed that body which it had assumed as a medium

between itself and the soul of the Virgin, and thus was able to maintain the divine heat. Ineffable sweetness overshadowed itself with itself, because it veiled so great sweetness in flesh, just as a man having something very sweet in his mouth tempers too great a sweetness when he conceals it by something else. It was rightly said, therefore, "the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee," when the light joined itself with the earthen vessel of our humanity, and the fire interposed the medium of the human body, and the ineffable sweetness veiled itself under the shadow of coming sorrow; then Mary, so saluted, so comforted, so made joyful by the greatness and glory of her offspring, so assured of the preservation of her purity, could but exclaim: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord! be it unto me according to Thy word." (S. Luke i. 38.)

With all loving reverence were these words spoken, and then at this very instant the Divine Word became Incarnate. It is this mystery of the Incarnation which the Church brings before us to-day.

Rejoice, ye heavens, and be silent, O world, for the Word is made flesh and dwelleth with you. Now comes to us our Friend and the heavenly cohabitant; the Virgin is the house

wherein He dwells. Let us, therefore, prepare ourselves, dearly beloved, worthily to receive this Divine Saviour, Who comes to us that He may enrich us with every blessing, and make us to be partakers of His grace, by which we may hope to gain eternal glory. (Diez.)

S. MARK'S DAY.

THE WORDS OF JESUS CHRIST.

“Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.”—*S. John* xv. 3.

I. *The holy fear God's judgments.*—Our Blessed Lord spake these words to the disciples lest they should become down-hearted because He had told them that the Father would take away every unfruitful branch which had been grafted into Himself, the True Vine; and would also purge or prune every fruit-bearing branch to make it the more productive. The Lord never gave a moment's unnecessary pain to any one. He was most careful in respect to His own followers, above all, not to “add sorrow upon sorrow.” His first words were necessarily calculated to disquiet the gentle, trustful hearts of those who loved Him. The holy and meek soul ever trembles at the least mention of the judgments of God; and the more generally these threatenings are expressed, the more does

it fear lest they should fall upon itself. It was so before, when He said to His disciples, "Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me;" we read, "they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto Him, "Lord, is it I?" (S. Matt. xxvi. 21, 22,) Holiness quickens every faculty of the soul, whilst sin so hardens the mind that the habitual sinner neither fears God nor believes in His judgments until they break over his devoted head.

II. *How the disciples were clean.*—"Ye are clean" were then the words of hope and encouragement by which the Master sought to allay any over-anxious disquietude in the minds of His servants. These were words of hope and comfort; not that they were to be taken in too literal a sense, as if Jesus Christ had told them that they were absolutely sinless. He, and He alone, was the only sinless One. For ourselves, the daily prayer is needful, "forgive us our trespasses" (S. Matt. vi. 12), "for in many things we offend all." (S. James iii. 2.) Hence, too, He said, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet." (S. John xiii. 10.) Now because the disciples were fruitful branches, the Father had by their obedience and self-sacrifice partly purified them

already. Firstly, they were "clean" or pure from the sin of unbelief; the darkness of the Sadducean code had been exchanged for the Gospel light, and the veil of judicial blindness for the freedom of the law of liberty. Secondly, they were clean from indulgence in wilful and habitual sin; sins of weakness and thoughtlessness they were ever falling into, but all save Judas were delivered from the slavery of deliberate guilt. Thirdly, they were "clean" on account of their faith in Jesus Christ, which caused their sins, which were many, to be all forgiven; so that they were clean in Him whilst they were sinners in themselves. The inspired writers speak of all members of the Church as "saints," and they are so called because they have both been cleansed by the Blood of Jesus, and have also received the Holy Ghost; yet these "saints" know and confess themselves to be sinners all the same. "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief" (1 S. Tim. i. 15), is S. Paul's testimony concerning himself.

It was a consolation, therefore, by no means to be despised by the sorrowful disciples when they heard their Lord saying unto them, "Ye are clean;" for who would not rejoice at hearing the words spoken unto him, "thy sins be

forgiven thee?" (S. Matt. ix. 2.) "Blessed is the man whose transgressions are forgiven, and whose sin is covered." (Ps. xxxii. 1.) It is for such a state of forgiveness as this, that holy souls are ever praying; and "to be clean" is the one burning desire of their hearts; the words are ever ringing in their ears, "Be ye holy for I am holy." (1 S. Pet. i. 16.) Now lest the Apostles should attribute this holiness to themselves or to their own righteousness, our Blessed Lord explains the instrumental cause of this their new condition, "through the word which I have spoken unto you." The Word of Jesus Christ can cleanse, and His word only.

III. *The cleansing power of the Word.*—The expression "the word which I have spoken unto you" may mean the entire life of Jesus Christ, as representing what He did by that Passion and Resurrection by which we are both justified and cleansed; or its meaning may be limited to some special words of blessing which He spake, such as, "Peace be unto you." (S. John xx. 19.)

IV. *The general power of words.*—We will take this divine saying in its most general meaning, and it then expresses that there is an inherent force or power in the very words themselves of our dear Lord. Verily, by its

very self does the word of God and of Jesus Christ cleanse. The words of the Saviour are as burning fire, and as the herb of the fuller; and so it is prophesied of Him: "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and He shall purify the sons of Levi." (Mal. iii. 3.) Words have a transforming power: the articulate pulses of air are by them changed into definite ideas and into burning thoughts, it is a change analogous to that by means of which the inorganic material of nature becomes converted into a living organism. Words are the shadows of the soul; and as they overshadow it, so do they react upon it by the several emotions which they convey to it. All earnest words, like all true knowledge, have a power of purification, and carry a certain hidden energy and power with them whenever and wherever they are spoken. If this is true of words in general, it is true in a far higher and wider sense of the words of the Lord Jesus.

V. *The words of Jesus Christ cleanse in five ways.*—Firstly, by conviction of sin. The word of Jesus strikes the soul of the sinner, and stays him in the midst of his course of forgetfulness and sin. It pierces his soul through and through as if it were an arrow. "Is not My word like fire?" saith the Lord.

“For My word tells of future punishment, that it may restrain men from sin; and it threatens to burn up the chaff of sinners, so that the hard hearts of heretics, which are as unmanageable as flint, may be broken up by the word which is ‘like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces’ (Jer. xxiii. 29), so making it soft, and able both to feel and to receive the commandments of God.” (S. Jerome.) “The word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit.” (Heb. iv. 12.) Such was the word that Nathan spoke to David, bringing home to him his sin in all its heinousness by the simple assertion, “Thou art the man.” (2 Sam. xii. 7.) Such was the word that our Lord spake to Saul the persecutor, “I am Jesus, Whom thou persecutest.” (Acts ix. 5.)

Secondly, by separation from sin and sinners. The word of Jesus Christ cleanses us by cutting off from us and from our members our several vices and sins. Our dear Lord was ever gentle and kind with sinners, whilst He was ever inexorable towards sin itself. He never gave it any place, no not for a moment; for the word of Jesus Christ suffers no sin which it does not reprove. He for-

bade even sin in the thought much less in the act. "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart." (S. Matt. v. 26.) If sin was by Him forbidden in thought, how much more so in word or deed? Abraham and Lot were bidden to leave the habitations of sinners. "Be ye separate," saith the Lord. (2 Cor. vi. 17.) The sword which Jesus Christ came to send on earth was the biting word of separation from sinners.

Thirdly. By exciting to goodness. The word of Jesus Christ cleanses the soul by inducing and exciting it to all good works. "Thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it." (Ps. cxix. 140.) "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." (Ps. xix. 7.) Hence all the calls to repentance, which are given in such numbers both by the prophets and the Lord; hence the stirring exhortations of the Apostles. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." (Eph. v. 14.) Hence in all His discourses our Lord's one great aim was to make man better, more truthful, more obedient to God's law, more loving, and more hopeful; to raise him not only to desire, but also to attain to better things.

Fourthly. By directing the soul to Himself. The word of Jesus Christ cleanses by leading the soul to Himself, who can alone take away all our sins. He directs us not to broken cisterns which hold no water, but to Himself, as to a fountain of life and purity, that we may in part become like Him, and so be cleansed from all filthiness, both of the flesh and of the spirit." (2 Cor. vii. 1.) That we may be simple and guileless, for "no guile was found in His mouth" (1 S. Pet. ii. 22); partakers of His holiness and of His truth, concerning which the officers of the chief priests and Pharisees bare such ample testimony. They could not apprehend Him; they had not the heart to do so, since "never man spake like this Man." (S. John vii. 46.) It was our Blessed Lord's desire that all men might become like unto Himself. "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart" (S. Matt. xi. 29), was the burden of His teaching; for He knew that the more man became like Himself, the nearer he would become to what God would have him be. So He led men to Himself, that they might look upon Him, and that in seeing Him they might see the Father. (S. John xiv. 9.)

Fifthly. By giving power and efficacy to the Sacraments. The word of Jesus Christ cleanses,

since it gives to the Sacraments their power of cleansing and sanctifying. If the word be withheld, the Sacraments are of no avail ; yea, rather without the word they are not Sacraments at all. The word united with the element constitutes a Sacrament. Take away the word from the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, and what is water but water ? The word, which is in the water, cleanses. Therefore S. Paul says that our dear Lord both loved and gave Himself for the Church, " that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word (Eph. v. 26) ; for Jesus Christ does indeed cleanse the Church by the laver of water, but he adds by the word of life, " which coming with the water gives to it the cleansing power." (S. Thos. Aq.) The word of Jesus Christ gives in like manner to the other Sacraments their power and efficacy. In the Holy Communion, for example, the bread which is broken is common bread, and the outpoured wine is common wine ; the words of institution are said over them, and then that was common becomes supernatural and holy, capable of nourishing the soul, as before the bread and wine were alone capable of nourishing the body. It is but the word of Jesus Christ, which being spoken over His creatures of

bread and wine, causes them to become His Body and Blood. All the strength and fulness of sacramental grace flows from the cleansing power of those words of Jesus, by which common things are dedicated to holy ends and purposes. The word of Jesus is the storehouse of sacramental riches, and the treasury of all power and grace. How blind shall we be if we do not then value this word as we ought to do. Our dear Lord most truly said, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." (S. John vi. 63.)

It was because men listened to His words, and ruled their lives by their guiding, that they became like S. Mark, whom we this day commemorate, devout and humble followers of the Lord upon earth, to be reckoned amongst the goodly number of those who, through faith and patience, will one day "inherit the promises."

SS. PHILIP AND JAMES'S DAY.

THE HIGH WAY OF THE CROSS.

“No man cometh unto the Father but by Me.”—
S. John xiv. 6.

I. *The way to the Father.*—Behold! in the Cross all doth consist; for there is no other way unto life. Thou shalt not find a higher way above, nor a safer way below, than the way of the Holy Cross. If thou bear the Cross cheerfully, it will bear thee and lead thee to the desired end, where there shall be an end of suffering. Know for certain that thou oughtest to lead a dying life. “We are killed all the day long” (Ps. xlv. 22); and the more any man dieth to himself, so much the more doth he begin to live unto God. (A’Kempis.) It was this truth which our Blessed Lord pointed out when He said that “No man cometh unto the Father but by Me.” It was to teach this lesson that the Church has joined together in one commemoration two of her distinguished apostles and martyrs, SS. Philip and James. Mark

the force of the word "cometh." Our Lord elsewhere said : " Again I leave the world, and go to the Father " (S. John xvi. 28); yet here He does not speak of going, but of coming to the Father. Why is this distinction made? To teach us that the presence of the Father is the fixed goal to which our Lord reaches, and to which all come who attain unto the blessing of eternal life. What was the way in which both the Lord and His disciples had to walk? The way of death was the way of coming to the Father of life; the high way of the Cross was the high way to glory. This way was trodden by SS. Philip and James, both of whom carried their crosses after the example which had been set them by Jesus Christ. It must be the way along which we also must make our journey in this life; we also must bear our several crosses. " If any man will come after Me, let him take up his cross daily and follow Me." (S. Matt. xvi. 24.) Oh! go not then, but come, with Jesus Christ for your companion, press onwards to the Father by the high way of the Cross.

II. SS. *Philip and James walked along the high way of the Cross.*—S. Philip of Bethsaida was the first of all the disciples to whom Jesus Christ said " Follow Me." These words found

an echo in his heart all his life long ; and his triumph, with that of S. James, is worthy to be joined with the victory of the Lord. S. Philip was present with the eleven after the Ascension, and afterwards he preached the Gospel in Phrygia. Hierapolis, in Syria, was a very idolatrous city, and here the apostle laboured with the most eminent success, and multitudes of the people were converted to the faith. There it was that its rulers, having scourged and tortured this disciple of the Lord, crucified him. So he was enabled to follow his Lord in his death, as he had followed Him in his life. The cross which Philip had so long carried, itself carried him to the regions of rest and joy.

There is a tradition extant, that when S. Philip was crucified, the earth was suddenly shaken, and all the region convulsed by an earthquake which swallowed up the district, and that, in their great fear, the bystanders invoked the God of S. Philip. When the Lord was crucified, " the earth did quake and the rocks rent " (S. Matt. xxvii. 21) ; and rightly therefore this movement of the earth at Hierapolis proved that Philip was bearing the image of his Saviour and his Lord. Truly he came to the Father by walking along the Son's high way of the Cross:

But what of his companion, S. James the Just, the first Bishop of Jerusalem? He, too, walked along this same path all his days, being also one of the four holy canonical Nazarites. The Scribes and Pharisees placed S. James one day upon the wing of the Temple, to proclaim what was "the door," or initiation by faith, "of Jesus." S. James bare his testimony to the truth, and the enraged Jews cast him down from the Temple, "and they began to stone him as he did not die immediately when cast down. What art thou looking for, O most holy soul? That Thou would receive me into Thy country. He knelt down on the ground, saying: "O Lord God and Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;" (Euseb.), repeating his Master's first word from the Cross. The fall from the Temple left some little life in S. James; the stoning did not wholly kill him; for it was ordained that he was not to die until he was quite conformed to the image of the Crucified. One of the spectators of his torture, seeing that he was praying, "beat out the brains of Justus with the club that he used to beat out clothes" (Euseb.), and so he died. That wooden club was an emblem of the Cross. The fall and the stones were insufficient to liken him to Jesus; the wood was to crown him

with martyrdom. By the way of Jesus Christ, by the high way of the Cross, S. James, like S. Philip, came to the Father.

III. *Jacob trode this path in vision.*—The well-known dream of Jacob, in a way less well known, yet not the less decisively, shows how men come to the Father by the way of the Son of God. Jacob saw in his sleep “a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached up to heaven, and the Lord stood above it.” (Gen. xxviii. 12, 13.) It is an opinion of many of the Fathers of the Church that Jacob beheld the bodily form of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was rendered visible to his eyes, and which was circumscribed in place. But I ask whether He Whom Jacob saw is He also Whom Moses calls the Lord God? I believe that it was God the Father Whom the patriarch beheld above the ladder, but that lower down the ladder itself he beheld Jesus Christ in His Body the Church as “the angels of God ascending and descending on it.” (Ibid.) Above it was God the Father of all worlds, and on it was Jesus Christ as the Head of His Church. What, then, does this ladder signify? It represents that standard of the cross to which the Lord Jesus was nailed and suspended. (Eusta.)

Let us now carefully note the lesson which

this interpretation teaches us. The ladder being the cross, all walking by this high way of the cross are enabled to reach the summit of the path, to gain God the Father of Spirits and live; yet we are bidden not to *go* but to *come* to Him by Jesus Christ, since Jesus shows Himself to us as our companion by the way, not accepting only for Himself that same way of the cross to walk in, but showing also that He is Himself the Way. Jesus Christ is the ladder, because he said by S. John, "I am the way." So far is He from bidding us travel alone, on this highway of sorrow, that He Himself becomes the way, so that He may bear us company in it. We cannot be without a way to walk in, when we might turn aside to the right hand or to the left. The ladder of God is the high way of the cross, and up the rounds of it marched S. Philip and S. James to receive their crown of martyrdom.

IV. *Jesus Christ Himself invites us to walk in this way.*—"Arise, my love, my fair one," says Jesus Christ; "O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock." (Cant. ii. 13, 14.) In this walking advance is ever needful; the soul that has risen, can go on rising still, can come even nearer to her God finishing her course. (S. Greg. Nyss.) "I would understand by the

'clefts of the rock' the wounds of Christ's hands and feet as He hung upon the Cross." (S. Greg.) "Come, my dove, into the clefts of the rock. The dove builds her nest in the rocks. We have Christ for our rock, and the clefts of it are the wounds in the Body of the Lord." (S. Ans.) The wounds of the Crucified One are the places of refuge for souls which are advancing towards their perfection. And note that the dove is not sent alone, but is bidden to "come," that it may begin its journey with Jesus Christ Crucified for its companion. The cross of Christ, of the Spouse, affords the means of progress. "Come into the clefts," since my wounds point out to you both a means of transport and a safe guide.

V. *The teaching of the martyrdoms of these Apostles.*—We can now understand why S. Philip survived his torments to die on the cross, and why S. James was killed neither by his fall nor by the stones, but by the wood ; that both these Apostolic martyrs, as two most pure and undefiled doves, entered into the clefts in Jesus the Rock ; that in union with the Lord, they might pass onwards to their heavenly country, and that by the ladder of the cross these angelic spirits followed their Master, that they might rest in the sight of the Father. The path of

heaven is not trodden without the burden of the cross : rather, the cross itself is the way. It is Jesus Christ as nailed to the wood of Whom we form our way ; Whom we take to be our companion that we may gain the heavenly country.

THE ASCENSION DAY.

THE FRUITS OF THE ASCENSION.

“After the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven.”—*S. Mark* xvi. 2.

I. *The Ascension was the end of our Lord's humiliation.*—The sacred work of our salvation, which the Maker of the universe valued at the price of His own Blood, was fulfilled, from the day of His birth in the body to the issue of His Passion, by means of an economy of humiliation. Although whilst in the form of a servant, many signs of divinity flashed forth from Him (S. Leo), still it was by His rising again, and by His Ascension, that the glory of Jesus Christ our Lord was completed. In the Easter Festival we celebrated His Resurrection, and now we celebrate His Ascension; both days are high festivals, for both events were the cause of many blessings to our race. He rose from the death, that He might furnish us with an example of resurrection; He ascended, that

He might guard us from above. Our Lord and Saviour is first seen hanging on the tree and afterwards sitting in heaven. When He hung upon the cross He paid a ransom for our sins ; now seated in heaven He gathers together, in one, all whom He has redeemed. It was for our sakes that our dear Lord did all this ; both what He sowed in the greatness of His assumed flesh, and also what, now glorious, as ascending, He stores up by reaping in heaven. This truth He beautifully prefigured. When about to ascend into heaven, He instructed the hearts of those disciples whom He was about to leave by many discourses. He scattered the seeds of life the more bountifully, so that when elevated to the right hand of the Father, He might Himself seal the fruit of His past work, which was about to be gathered into the garner of heavenly glory. When He had fulfilled all things, on the fortieth day after His Resurrection He was taken up into heaven in the sight of His disciples, according to the words of the text : “ After the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received into heaven.”

II. *Why Jesus Christ Ascended.*—It may occur to some minds, that it would have been better for our Blessed Lord to have remained with us and lived bodily upon the earth after He rose

from the dead, that so by His bodily presence we might be consoled under our adversities, and by His ineffable doctrine we might be defended in the faith against all heresy or error. It was for these reasons that the disciples did not hear of the going away of their Lord without grief and sorrow. "I go My way to Him that sent Me. But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart." (S. John xvi. 5, 6.) The mistake of such thoughts will appear, if we consider that on the part of Jesus Christ ascending, it was meet that the truth of the Resurrection having been proved "by many infallible proofs" (Acts i. 3) on the fortieth day according to the nature of His Body now glorified, He should ascend into heaven.

The glorified body ought to dwell in a place of glory, so the glorified Body of the Lord would naturally abide in a proportionate dwelling-place. For a twofold reason the highest place in the heaven was meet to receive His glorified Body. In the first place, our dear Lord entered at the Resurrection upon an incorruptible and immortal life; a state of glory was more fitting for Him than this place of suffering and of corruption, in which we are dwelling now. In the second place, the dignity of the habitation ought to agree with the dig-

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nity of the inhabitant. The Body of our Blessed Lord is above all other bodies on account of the excellency of its glory; and by the hypostatic union, it exceeds in dignity every spirit and every other creature. Rightly, therefore, does He ascend far above all the spiritual heavens; the holy angels, and the blessed. "He that descended, is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens." (Eph. iv. 10.) "Our lowly nature was in Christ advanced above all the host of heaven, above all the ranks of angels, and beyond the height of all powers, to sit down with God the Father." (S. Leo.)

III. *The benefits of the Ascension.*—It was for our sakes also that the Lord ascended.

Firstly. That He might so prepare a way for us to ascend to Him. "I go to prepare a place for you." (S. John xiv. 2.) "The Breaker is come up before them." (Micah ii. 13.) Since He is our Head, it behoves the members to follow to that place whither the Head has gone before. "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." (S. John xiv. 3.) In proof of this ascending up on high "He led captivity captive," (Eph. iv. 8) taking souls from Hades into Heaven.

Secondly. That He might be our Advocate and Intercessor. "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Heb. vii. 25.) For Christ is entered "into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." (Heb. ix. 24.) The very presence of our human nature in heaven, is in itself an act of intercession.

Thirdly. To give us the gifts of His grace. So after "Thou hast led captivity captive," it is added, "Thou hast received gifts for men." (Ps. lxxviii. 13.) "He led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men." (Eph. iv. 8.) Our Blessed Lord tells us what these gifts are; "I tell you the truth: it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send Him unto you." (S. John xvi. 7.) "As He who was born for our sakes gave us all other things, so was His Ascension also accomplished for our sakes." (S. Bern.)

IV. *The threefold effect of the Ascension upon ourselves.*—"By this Ascension of the Lord, we have been founded, we have been built, that the grace of God might become more manifest, when after the removal from men's sight of the things which were justly felt to claim reverence

faith did not doubt; hope did not waver; love did not wax lukewarm." (S. Leo.) By the Ascension of our Lord, reverence towards God increased in us; that reverence which is the beginning of fear—of filial, but not of servile fear. Since by the Ascension we worship Jesus Christ as God, for "though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more." (2 Cor. v. 16.) Henceforth our Blessed Lord is powerful not in earth alone, but also in heaven.

Firstly. The Ascension should increase our faith. It was by the Ascension "that the Son of Man, the Son of God, became known in a more transcendent and sacred way. When He betook Himself to the glory of the Sacred Majesty, and in an ineffable manner began to be more present in His Divinity when He became further off in His humanity, then did a more instructed faith begin to approach by the steps of the mind, to the Son co-equal to the Father, and not to need any handling of the corporeal substance in Jesus Christ, wherein He is inferior to the Father. For while the nature of the Glorified Body remained, thither was the faith of believers summoned where the Only Begotten might be touched, not by a hand of flesh, but by spiritual understanding; this faith

increased by the Ascension of the Lord, has not been overawed by chains, nor imprisonments, nor banishments, nor famine, nor the sword, nor the teeth of wild beasts, nor by any punishments invented by the cruelty of persecutors. In this faith throughout the whole world, not only young boys, but even tender maidens contended, even to the shedding of their own blood. It has cast out demons, driven away sickness, raised the dead. Hence also the blessed Apostles themselves, who, although confirmed by so many miracles, instructed by so many discourses, had yet been scared by the dreadfulness of the Lord's Passion, and had not received, without hesitation, the truth of the Resurrection, profited so greatly by the Lord's Ascension, that whatever before had caused them fear was turned into joy." (S. Leo.) S. Luke writes, "While He blessed them, He was parted from them and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy." (S. Luke xxiv. 52.) They rejoiced because their faith was confirmed, since they had seen that humanity to which they so sweetly clave, ascending by its own power into heaven; they joyed because they now knew that they could not have believed in vain, since they did no longer doubt,

that He was the Lord of heaven, Whom they had followed on earth, for Whom they had forsaken all things.

Secondly. The Ascension should strengthen our hope. For "whither the glory of the Head has gone before, thither is the hope of the body summoned." (S. Leo.) So He exalted our nature into heaven, and He has promised that at last He will lift us up to Himself. He says now, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself." (S. John xvi. 3.) Forasmuch as we know beforehand what things are in store for us, let us learn to hope in the promise, and let us receive the past and the present goodness of our God, as a security for what is to come. He through Whom heaven and earth were made, for the sake of him whom he made out of earth, descended upon earth, and hence into heaven He exalted earth. Since He has gone before us there, we may hope that at last He will render to us as He promised. Let us be secure of the pledge He gave.

Do you think that He Who for our sakes has already bestowed His death will not restore His life to us? He endured on earth for our sakes the humility of suffering, injuries, contumelies, every indignity, and will He not give

us a kingdom, happiness, and immortality? He carried our sorrows, and will He not enrich us with His joys? In this hope (since He Who has promised is true) let us walk securely, and let us so live that by His grace we may be enabled to say, I have done what Thou hast commanded, reward me therefore as Thou hast promised.

Thirdly. The Ascension should inflame our love. By the Ascension was that love enkindled in the souls of the disciples which their earthly converse with their Lord had failed to develope. The minds of the disciples were unable, without some change of the affections, to be advanced to the higher understanding of the faith, nor did they attempt as yet to rise to spiritual things, so our Lord aroused them through the affection of His Flesh. At first He taught them that by love they might cling to a certain man, working miracles and speaking wonderful words; by a love as yet fleshly, but still so strong as to conquer all their own affections. He was like the serpent of Moses, which devoured all the snakes of the magicians. (Exod. vii. 12.) The Apostles said, "Behold, we have forsaken all and followed Thee." (S. Matt. xix. 27.) Our Blessed Lord at length wished to lead their minds from all those

earthly thoughts which were centred around His Flesh, to that hope which could only be gained by abstracting their minds from the circumstances of His earthly life, now fast passing away for ever. The soul which is filled with other things cannot receive the fulness of spiritual grace; therefore ascend ye in thought with Christ into heaven, and abstract yourselves from the earthly sight of Him. (S. Bern.) The understandings of the Apostles were in part renewed, and only in part. They waited for spiritual consolation, and yet they would preserve the consolations of the flesh and of the world; they tried to serve the flesh and the spirit, the world and Christ, Mammon and God. Now the soul in order to be filled with divine visitations must not fall under the distractions of this world, and it is filled with the former in proportion as it empties itself of the latter; they can never mingle together. When the woman could not find any more empty vessels it became necessary to stop the supply of oil. (2 Kings iv. 4.) "New wine must be put into new bottles, and both are preserved." (S. Luke v. 38.) So neither the spirit and the flesh, nor heat and cold, can abide in the same dwelling-place. (S. Bern.) This heavenly sweetness cannot be found in ashes, nor this divine balsam in

poison. These precious gifts of the Spirit cannot be mingled with unlawful pleasures. Every one is deceived who has not tried first wholly to renounce the consolations of the flesh.

So it is that few come to perfection, because so few embrace that full and consistent mortification of carnal consolations, which is the beginning of the blessed life.

V. *Our Ascension comfort.*—We learn that nothing can harm us ; for all things are in the power of our ascended Lord, Who although He is raised far up from us in the body is yet present with us in the spirit of His grace and the omnipotence of His Godhead ; Who the more readily works in and for us, as He finds us freed from all carnal love. Hence He says of His own Flesh, “ It is the Spirit that quickeneth ; the flesh profiteth nothing.” (S. John vi. 63.) The consolation and teaching is alike interior ; outward words and consolation avail not. He ascended from us that we may ascend too, and follow Him, the immaculate Lamb, whithersoever He goeth. (S. Greg.) We follow Him descending from heaven, Him suffering, Him rising again ; but we follow Him ascending more readily still.

Let your presumption be humbled, your old man of sin be crucified with Him, “ that like as

Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Rom. vi. 4.) Lastly, the dignity of this resurrection demands a higher place; let us, therefore, follow Him ascending into heaven, and let us "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God" (Col. iii. 1), whither through His mercy and grace may we all one day be led.

THE ASCENSION DAY.

SERMON II.

THE MOUNT OF OLIVES.

“He led them out as far as to Bethany.”—*S. Luke* xxiv. 50.

ON the north-east side of Jerusalem is a long mountain ridge, with four distinct summits, attaining a height of nearly 3000 feet. A charming mount, where David went to worship ere the Temple was yet built, over which also he afterwards fled on his way to Mahanaim, during Absalom's revolt. In early times the date-palm, the myrtle, and the pine held their place with the olive and the fig-tree. Much barrenness and desolation has come over the spot since these memorable days; the palm, pine, and myrtle are alike gone; but here and there, on the road side, the fig-tree still stands; and in the gentler slopes and in the hollows the olive still flourishes. The village of Bethany is on the *east* side of the hilly ridge, and there is Bethphage and the tomb of Lazarus. Let us

pause for a moment on the wild uplands above this village of Bethany, which by the hills below is shut out from the view, just as the city is screened from the right by the higher hills behind. The prospect looks afar off, stretching away over the barren plains which lead down to the Dead Sea. "The view opening only the wide waste of desert rocks and ever descending valleys into the depths of the distant Jordan, its mysterious Lake." (Stan.)

Close to, yet shut out and apart from the sight and noise of the great city, severed even from the associations of Bethany, was where the farewell was taken of our Lord by His disciples ; with them He crossed over that brook Kedron, and then by that garden of Gethsemane unto which He often resorted with His disciples onwards, to that middle table-land of the mountain with its eastern expanse. He suffered in the city—He was to be glorified in retirement ; this very last act teaching us a lesson of meekness. From the southern shoulder of this Mount of Olives had the triumphal procession into Jerusalem been made, and now crossing perhaps by the same path He goes up to the place of the Ascension—not from one of the four peaks, but from an eastern table land in the mount did our Blessed Lord ascend.

Our Blessed Lord was "as an eagle [which] stirreth up her nest fluttereth over her young, [and] spreadeth abroad her wings." (Deut. xxxii. 11.) As "the way of an eagle in the air" (Prov. xxx. 19) was the way or life of our Blessed Lord, who flying upwards to His Father after His Resurrection, taught men how to return after death to life. He pointed out the way to heaven by His impress upon the Mount of Olives, as if He said, He who wishes to follow Me must ascend with Me from this mount.

I. *This Mount of Olives was a mount of prayer.*—"Over the brook Kedron was a garden . . . Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with His disciples." (S. John xviii. 1-2.) "He came out, and went as He was wont to the mount of Olives." (S. Luke xxii. 39.) There, at the western foot of the mount was the garden of Gethsemane, containing the olive garden and the cavern of our Blessed Lord's prayer and agony, and there He prayed and others with Him immediately before His Passion.

Prayer is the first way to heaven from the mount of Olives. "Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer nor His mercy from me." (Ps. lxvi. 20.) We are secure when

God hears our prayer. The mercy of God and our prayers are the two bladders which, like children, we use to bear us up in this world's sea. If one be broken, the other is useless. The mercy of God preserves us as long as it is joined with our prayer. When prayer is discarded, mercy is taken away and man perishes. Jonah's prayer from the whale's belly brought mercy. S. Peter's "Lord save me" (S. Matt. xiv. 30) bore him up when beginning to sink. The disciples in the tempest cried out, "Lord, save us, we perish" (S. Matt. viii. 25), and they found His mercy at once. Great care should be taken lest this cord be broken which connects our prayer with God's mercy. The pagans used to bind the statues of their gods, lest they should leave them; the Syrians bound Hercules, and the Lacedemonians the statue of Mars. We can bind our God to ourselves with a stronger cord by our prayers. God was very angry with Israel. "I will not go up in the midst of thee, for thou art a stiff-necked people." (Exod. xxxiii. 5.) Moses said, "If Thy Presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." (ver. 15.) God answers, "I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken." (ver. 17.)

II. *This mount was a mount of mercy.*—Here

mercy shown (1) to the disciples, giving them protection. "If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way" (S. John xviii. 8), as yet they are weak and timid. (2) To the band of apprehenders. "They went backward, and fell to the ground" (S. John xviii. 6), and the Lord raised them up again. (3) To Malchus. "He touched his ear and healed him." (S. Luke xxii. 51.) The olive itself is always the symbol of mercy. Oil and wine were poured into the traveller's wounds by the good Samaritan. Seated upon this same mount, the Lord taught the law of mercy and compassion: "Come, ye blessed children of my Father, for I was an hungred and ye gave me meat, &c." (S. Matt. xxv. 39-40.) Solomon made within the oracle two cherubims of olive tree, "within the inner house" (1 Kings vi. 23, 27), symbolising that it was by works of mercy that men reached the Presence and the will of God.

III. *It was a mount of suffering and passion.*
—There in the garden our Blessed Lord began His Passion, His treading of the wine-press of the fierceness of the wrath of God: there was He betrayed, bound, and led away in the power of His enemies. He showed that to be the way to glory which was the way of His Passion and the cross. Daniel and his companions

had pulse to eat and water to drink (Dan. i. 12), and yet looked fairer than all the others, who were fed with the king's meat and wine. The king was to be pleased, yet the fast was to be kept. So God fashions us in this world for the glory of the next, as the stones of Solomon's temple were shapen in the quarry, and without noise all built up into one temple in Jerusalem. The Passion was the beginning of the Ascension.

IV. *It was a mount of meditation for the future.*—It was from the Mount of Olives, on a western summit overlooking Jerusalem, that our Blessed Lord spoke that wondrous prophecy of the latter days, recorded by S. Matthew (chaps. xxiv., xxv.), and gave the several parables of the coming judgment, of the servants waiting for their Lord, the ten virgins, the talents, &c. ; for in that day, the day of Judgment, "His feet shall stand upon the Mount of Olives," and there shall He judge both quick and dead. He ascended where He will one day descend. This is the mount of earnest consideration of our last end.

Let us ascend spiritually this Mount of Olives, overlooking not an earthly but an heavenly Jerusalem, so shall we surely find our way to heaven. The human footprints left on

the mount are apocryphal ; but as Jesus Christ ascended, let us follow His example, and let us learn to tread in the pure and holy footsteps of His earthly life which was itself divine.

S. BARNABAS THE APOSTLE.

A GOOD MAN.

“He was a good man, full of the Holy Ghost and of faith.”—
Acts xi. 24.

I. *S. Barnabas a true Apostle of the Lord.*—These words are a record of S. Barnabas, whose festival we are keeping to-day, and from the holiness of whose life we can take such an example for the ordering of our own lives—that with him we may one day gain the Paradise of God.

Some may ask how S. Barnabas came to be numbered amongst the apostolate, for he was not amongst the twelve who were both chosen and named by our Blessed Lord Himself. Jesus Christ once said to His disciples: “Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world; but if a man walk in the night he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.” (S. John xi. 9, 10.) This was not said of the natural day alone; but it was

spoken of Himself, since Jesus Christ is that day of which David spake, saying: "One day in Thy courts is better than a thousand." (Ps lxxxiv. 10.) The twelve hours of this day were the twelve holy Apostles.

In this first company, neither S. Barnabas nor S. Paul found a place; yet our Blessed Lord had elected S. Barnabas in His heart when He said: "Ye which have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones." (S. Matt. xix. 28.) In this exaltation He did not speak of Judas, but of S. Matthias, and the other Apostles who were elected after the Ascension.

Our Blessed Lord chose S. Paul, the greatest of the Apostles, when he was on his way to persecute the Church, and yet he was "a chosen vessel with Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel." (Acts ix. 15.) S. Barnabas was likewise elected by his Divine Lord when at the right hand in glory: for the disciples "ministered to the Lord and fasted;" and then "the Holy Ghost said, Separate Me Barnabas and Saul." (Acts xiii. 2.) So S. Barnabas was manifestly a true Apostle of Jesus Christ, although not chosen by Him during His so-

jour upon earth. But why out of all the other Apostles was S. Barnabas especially selected to this high honour? Our text answers this question, by assigning to S. Barnabas four excellencies, and these we will explain in their natural order.

II. *S. Barnabas was a man.*—The word which is used for “man” here signifies that he was a man of courage and principle, one who deserves the name of a man. There are many men (*homines*) who are great sinners, but he is called a man from his virtue, for he was both virtuous and good. He can rightly be called a man whose understanding, memory, will, and works are ordered according to God and His commandments, irrespective altogether of the opinion of man. Firstly. He is weak, and unworthy the name of a man, who cannot withstand a little wind or pressure; so spiritually he is no man who soon falls under those winds or temptations of which the world is so full. “A great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks.” (1 Kings xix. 11.) “The mountains” were Adam, Samson, David, Solomon, and others, who were overcome by the winds of temptation, and not being strong, not being men, immediately fell. They are the true men, the

virtuous and strong, whom no temptations can overcome.

Secondly. When any one carries a heavy weight easily he is said to be manly, but unmanly if he falls under it. He is a man who bears nobly the burden of his mortal nature, "for the corruptible body is a load upon the soul, and the earthly habitation presseth down the mind." (Wisd. ix. 15.) It is unmanly, therefore, not to carry the burden of the flesh nobly and well; to give way to its several lusts and appetites; to sink all the higher aspirations of a new and a better nature under the pressure of a body which is so soon to die.

Thirdly. The present life is indeed a sandy path in which, without great care and strength, the feet are ever slipping. There are in life so many occasions of sin, by hearing, seeing, and acting; so many evil opportunities, that he is a true man who falls not, but walks firmly along its slippery paths.

Fourthly. In this world we have so many griefs, tribulations, pains, infirmities and persecutions, that many fall away through impatience. But he who knows how to protect himself against the wind of temptations, under the burden of sinful inclinations, amidst the sand of occasions of sin, and to resist the

impetus or stroke of temptations, is truly a man, strong, able, wary, and firm. It was in this sense that S. Barnabas was called "a man."

We have in the case of holy Job another illustration of this use of the word man. Job was "perfect and upright," for although he was composed of body and soul, it was by this latter that he was governed. "Upright," since he did not allow himself to fall into sin and distrust of God; "One that feared God," and so escaped the snares of the devil, "and eschewed evil" (Job i. 1), by avoiding the sinful inclinations of the flesh.

Such "a man" as this was S. Barnabas, who, despising earthly things, sought alone those which are heavenly and eternal. S. Barnabas was of Cyprus, of the race of Aaron and the tribe of Levi, "having land;" he was also well read in the law of Moses, and when he heard a report of the graces, miracles, and teaching of the Apostles, he came up to Jerusalem wishing to see them. This visit produced an entire change in the truly manly Barnabas, for he was so much struck with what he heard, that he became a convert. Mark how earnestly preaching is to be listened to, if it be expected to do any good, for the holy words can only sink into a soul, and produce their proper fruit, when

they are received with all earnestness of purpose and intention.

This hearing the word was the first step in the illumination of S. Barnabas, the second of which resulted from a process of reasoning of this sort : Now that I have heard the teaching of these men, I want to see how they live, for many preach very well who live very badly. So he came amongst them ; and when he remarked that they lived in common ; that none had a special fund of his own, save the directors of the men and women ; he was wholly satisfied as to the nature of their life. S. Barnabas then observed the miracles which the Apostles wrought—curing the blind, the deaf and dumb, and others—and at last he came to the conclusion that God and God alone could be the worker of such signs and wonders. He wanted no other proof ; but at once returning to Cyprus he sold his land, “and brought the money and laid it at the Apostles’ feet” (Acts iv. 27), telling them of his race and his country, and desiring to be admitted as a member of their society. To this earnest request the Apostles readily consented ; he was received by them, and Joses became Barnabas, “which is being interpreted, The Son of Consolation” (Acts v. 36) ; for the Apostles were greatly

comforted by him, and enabled to relieve the poor out of his offering. So acting, he proved himself to be "a man," noble, candid, and fearless. S. Barnabas was also man enough to exchange earthly for heavenly riches.

III. S. *Barnabas* "*was a good man.*"—The second excellency to be noted in S. Barnabas is, that he was a "good man"—that is holy, just, or pious. Moral goodness implies unselfishness; a care not for our own advantage alone, but also for the good of others; they are many who are far from good, who are keenly alive to their own selfish interest. God "gave to every one of them commandment concerning his neighbour." (Exod. xvii. 12.) This is a good which in its own nature is capable of being communicated or diffused for the benefit of others. Wherefore "Achish said to David, I know that thou art good in my sight as an angel of God." (1 Sam. xxix. 9.) For an "angel of God" although he cannot lose glory nor essentially increase it, yet he seeks out others to be partakers of it, inciting them to goodness and recalling them from sin. Goodness, therefore, consists in a generous concern for the welfare of others, and in this sense of the word S. Barnabas "*was a good man,*" since he desired to extend to the whole world,

the blessings of which he had by divine grace become a partaker. He went about preaching from village to village and from city to city, having given up his land and his home: this very unselfishness proclaimed him to be a "good man."

A special act of goodness is also recorded of S. Barnabas. S. Paul when converted came to Jerusalem, and after his escape from Damascus "he assayed to join himself with the disciples, but they were all afraid of him. Barnabas then took him and brought him to the Apostles; and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus." (Acts ix. 26.) What gladness and joy was imparted by this miraculous conversion; fear was changed into gladness of heart, and opposition into a most loving friendship and fellow-working. It was a great delight doubtless to S. Barnabas as a "good man," to be a messenger of reconciliation; and the bearer of tidings for the common good. Let us endeavour to show our goodness likewise, by helping in every way that church and congregation to which we are attached; seeking to do good to all those whom it may be within our power to help.

Once more. S. Barnabas showed his great kindness of heart, which is one form of moral goodness, by taking with him into Cyprus on his second Apostolic journey, that same John Mark whom "Paul thought not good to take with them" (Acts xv. 38), because on their first journey when they came to Perga in Pamphylia "John departing from them returned to Jerusalem" (Acts xiii. 13), being afraid of undergoing persecution with them, and hence deserving but small consideration at the hands of S. Barnabas. John Mark had doubtless sincerely repented of his cowardice and selfishness, and so was most lovingly forgiven by S. Barnabas, who was a "good man." As the goodness of S. Barnabas was shown in the Church, so should our moral goodness be manifested at home in all our several relations of life. A good husband should try to reclaim an unloving wife; a true-hearted wife an abandoned and dissolute husband. Children too, if their parents be really good people, are not merely fed and clothed and tended, but are instructed in higher and holier lessons of duty and of life; a good parent as a rule makes a good son. Sons and daughters are those young trees which the gardeners by marriage plant in the garden of Jesus Christ; and if they grow stunted in moral

senses, or crooked from evil ways, the fault lies with the parents. "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." (1 S. Tim. v. 8.) Each one likewise ought to communicate good to all those who may in any way be brought under his influence, either in the way of help in the condition of sin; or comfort and support in the way of holiness.

IV. *S. Barnabas was "full of the Holy Ghost."*—This gift of God the Holy Ghost was the third excellence of S. Barnabas; and it is to be remembered that the grace which makes us acceptable to God is only to be obtained by the indwelling presence of God the Holy Ghost; hence when He leaves the soul, man falls into sin, but whilst He remains, divine grace enables us to stand. Now S. Barnabas possessed both the presence of God the Holy Ghost and the grace which makes a man acceptable; so that we can say with truth, that the grace of God was to be seen in all his words and deeds. This excellence of grace was remarkable in the effects it wrought by him during his year's sojourn at Antioch, where he converted a large multitude of persons to the faith, and even changed the name itself of those who followed

our Blessed Lord. "The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." (Acts xi. 26.) The name disciple was correlative to that of apostle, and therefore S. Barnabas thought it better that a wider and more comprehensive name should be attached to the professors of the faith; one that expressed their relationship to Jesus Christ, and their derivation from Him. S. Barnabas so fulfilled the prophecy which was uttered in relation to the calling of the Gentiles, when He shall "call His servants by another name: that he who blessed himself in the earth, shall bless himself in the God of truth." (Isa. lxxv. 15, 16.) God ever attached great importance to names; hence the frequent change of name in Holy Scripture as indicative of some new dealings or relationships with the world unseen: Jacob to Israel; Abram to Abraham; Saul to Paul, and Joses to Barnabas; and the followers of the Lord, instead of being called as heretofore "men of this way," were now openly known by the name of Christians. This change of name at Antioch was a convincing proof that S. Barnabas was full of the Holy Ghost. The life of S. Barnabas furnishes us with further evidence that he was in possession of the same divine gift. At Lystra SS. Paul and Barnabas healed a cripple, and the people of the city

called Barnabas Jupiter; "and the priest of Jupiter brought oxen and garlands into the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people; which when the Apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of, they rent their clothes" (Acts xiv. 8, 13, 14), and refused any homage. The fulness of the Holy Ghost drove away from S. Barnabas the spirit of vain glory, and led him in everything to render due honour to God; so that he could say to Him, "Thy Spirit is good, lead me into the land of uprightness." (Ps. cxliii. 10.)

From this example we learn, in all our words and deeds, to give honour to God. By the omission of which duty many blessings are lost to us. "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." (Colos. iii. 17.)

V. *S. Barnabas was full of faith.*—The fourth excellence of S. Barnabas, and one by which he was rightly glorious, was that he was "full of faith;" for the fulness of faith glorifies. Christian faith hath such power, that he who holds it in his heart God will verily make glorious, either by some special gift in this world, or by the possession of eternal glory in the world to come. To the woman with an issue of blood our Lord said, "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole." (S. Mark v. 34.) He did not say,

“thy humility,” or “thy patience,” but “thy faith.” S. Paul, also speaking of our “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,” says, “By Whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand.” (Rom. v. 2.) So S. Barnabas, on account of his fulness of faith, both preached and cured all diseases. We do not read that he carried any other book with him on his Apostolic journeys save the Gospel according to S. Matthew, which most fully treats of the life of Jesus Christ ; and when the sick were brought to him to be healed, he used to place this volume of the Gospel upon the head of the suppliant in the name of Jesus Christ, and a cure was wrought. Consider, then, how glorious S. Barnabas was in this world by his miraculous powers, and that he is also still more so in the unseen world by his rewards, since he bravely won the crown of martyrdom.

IV. *The Lesson of the life of S. Barnabas.*—Our lesson from the effects of faith, as seen in the life and death of S. Barnabas is, that as Christian faith has so great grace, we should earnestly strive and pray to gain it. All faith is comprehended in these simple words : “I believe in God ;” and they should be repeated both morning and evening with protestations of

such belief. It was in a spirit of faith that David said, "I believe," that is, in heart, "therefore have I spoken," that is, expressed my faith in words, and with what result? "I was greatly afflicted;" but he adds, "Thou hast loosed my bonds." (Ps. cxvi. 10-16.)

Let us pray and humble ourselves, that the manliness and the goodness, the grace and the faith of S. Barnabas may now, in part at least, be ours; that so we, O Lord, may believe in Thee, and please Thee, and do Thy most holy will, and learn to endure bravely all the misfortunes and vicissitudes of this mortal life.

S. JOHN BAPTIST'S DAY.

THE MAN OF GOD.

“The Prophet of the Highest.”—*S. Luke i. 70.*

“A PROPHET? yea, and more than a prophet,” was that which our Blessed Lord testified, and also in other like words, to the person and honour of S. John Baptist. Verily S. John had a hard life, which was ended by a cruel and unmerited death, and yet all men spake well of him.

Herod was his bitter, bloody enemy; a thoroughly bad man; but even he testified of S. John's holiness. (1) “Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and he observed [or kept] him, and heard him gladly.” (*S. Mark vi. 20.*) The testimony of an enemy is conclusive. (2) Universal testimony is worthy of all credit. “All hold John as a prophet.” (*S. Matt. xxi. 26.*) (3) The testimony of an angel must be true. “He shall be great in the sight of the Lord.”

(S. Luke i. 15.) (4) The testimony of God standeth sure. Our Blessed Lord praises S. John all through the Gospel, saying that he was not a reed shaken by the wind; that he was a prophet, and more than a prophet; that he was His messenger or angel; and lastly He adds, in a verse not included in the day's Gospel, "Among men that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist." (v. 11.) Herod, all men, Gabriel, and our Blessed Lord, alike testify to S. John's goodness and worth; earth, heaven, and the King of heaven all give evidence in his favour. He was approved: "For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but he whom the Lord commendeth." (2 Cor. x. 18.) Why was this united testimony recorded in the favour of S. John Baptist?—of one who courted no man? of one who was jealous in rebuking the sins of all?

I .*Because he was most firm in his principles.*—A reed was by our Blessed Lord put in contrast with S. John Baptist. It grows out of the sand or soft ground, and is easily torn up, broken by the wind, loosened by the rain, and washed away by the stream. (1) The wind represents the various temptations of the Spirit of the power of the air; it presses down the reed even

to breaking ; it bears down the soul from its lofty and right walk. S. John Baptist was sorely tempted when the Jews wished to receive him as the Messiah. The temptation to take this honour must have been present with him ever since he was man: But he denied, saying, "I am not the Christ." (S. John i. 20.) The wind of the pomp and vanity of the world injured him not. (2) As the rain descending from heaven loosens the reed, so do the adversities which come from God try the faith, as in the case of Job. S. John Baptist, although in prison, and tried by God, remained firm to his principles and to his mission. (3) The flood signifies the tyranny of the world—the ungodly coming on like a flood. In death, as in life, S. John was firm. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." (Job xiii. 15.) If we build firmly upon our Lord Jesus Christ, the wind, rain, and flood will have no power to injure us ; temptation, trial, and persecution will not harm us ; for the worse can never really harm the better ; so shall we stand in the evil day.

II. *Because he was a man of great truth in his words.*—Hence our Blessed Lord calls him "a prophet, yea, and more than a prophet." There was nothing exaggerated, over-coloured,

high-flown in his speech ; all his words were those of soberness and truth, and because he was so very truthful, he was indeed "more than a prophet." Moses was a prophet of the past, Isaiah of the future, and Elijah of the present. S. John Baptist was a prophet whose words embraced all the three periods. (1) The past, since he knew by the Holy Ghost the holy Nativity of Jesus Christ. "He that cometh from heaven is above all." (S. John iii. 31.) (2) The present, for he knew Jesus Christ to be the Son of God. "I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God." (S. John i. 34.) (3) The future, for he recognised Jesus Christ as about to be immolated upon the Altar of the Cross. "Behold the Lamb of God." (S. John i. 36.) The same Holy Spirit teaches us secrets of all time, and the simple expression of truth is capable of containing mighty treasures of knowledge. Simple, plain truth ever gains the day against all exaggerated and high-flown speech. Our Blessed Lord was very simple in what He said, yet "He spake with authority," and with great weight and meaning, "and not as the scribes." We are not called upon to prophesy, but we are all called upon to be truthful in all we say, and to express our thoughts as genuinely and as

simply as we can. The habit of colouring what we narrate, and of exaggerating its details, is a very common one, and cannot be too much guarded against. We can learn a lesson from the speech of the Baptist.

III. *Because he was a man of very holy life.*—The life of S. John Baptist commended his message. There was no schism between his words and his deeds. Hence he was the Lord's messenger or angel; and as such, it behoved him to manifest in his life purity, love, and obedience. (1) Purity, for God's angels are spirits. (Heb. i. 7.) His messengers are pure by His grace; (2) love, for "His ministers are a flame of fire," that is, burning love. This love of his work made S. John Baptist despise all else than his Master's service. He could say with Jeremiah, "I have forsaken mine house, I have left mine heritage," (Jer. xii. 7,) leaving his priesthood and his father's house to be a prophet of a new order. (3.) S. John Baptist had his obedience tested in three ways. Firstly, he was commanded to baptize his Lord, and this command his humility at first caused him to reject; but it carried its own reward with it. Secondly, he was commanded to flee from man and go into the desert—to forsake the comforts of life. This he readily did. Thirdly, he was

bidden to undertake the laborious office of a preacher. He hardly liked to execute this office, as entrenching upon the higher mission of the Lord, and perhaps as assuming a kind of equality with Him, and perhaps in other ways infringing somewhat upon the prerogatives of his Divine Master; and yet he readily obeyed the call, because it involved a certain labour and self-sacrifice—it was a call of dignity and of difficulty combined. He waited for thirty years till the call came, and then he rose up at once to do the Lord's will.

For all these reasons, and for more which might be given, the name of S. John Baptist as a just, earnest, self-denying man will last whilst the Christian records themselves stand. He held his own nobly in life by his firmness, truth, and holiness, setting us a bright example of how to live, and a brighter example of how to die. A mighty truth, a wondrous lifting up of the veil of God's providence is seen in the right reading of the fact, that for all S. John Baptist was so true and faithful a servant of God, God did deliver him over unto the will of his enemies, and assigned to him a hard lot in this life; but it was that in the life to come he might be crowned with glory, honour, immortality, even eternal life.

S. PETER'S DAY.

CONTRITION.

“He went out and wept bitterly.”—*S. Matt. xxvi. 73.*

I. *The depth of true contrition.*—Who, without shedding tears of sympathy, can behold this continuous grief of S. Peter? It is a tradition related by S. Gregory the Great that this great Apostle never ceased to weep; that he went mourning and softly all his days in bitterness of soul, for the remembrance of the sad time of the denial was ever present with him. The sin had long been pardoned; many a noble act of self-devotion to the cause of Jesus Christ had given an ample satisfaction for the few moments of weakness; S. Peter was placed at the head of the Apostolic College, and bore a sublime testimony to Him Whom he so loved and proclaimed; but in spite of all this the cock never crowed but Peter wept. He irrigated again by his tears that plant of grace which had withered by his threefold denial of the faith.

He wept that he might be able the more readily to root out from his heart the tares, those evil consequences which remain as the residue and consequences of a sin long since pardoned; since from well moistened earth the tares and other noxious weeds are extracted without much difficulty.

II. *Contrition is a life-long work.*—This great saint and Apostle teaches us by his tears that the efficacy and effect of a real repentance does not rest in the sacrament of repentance alone, but that it demands also the co-operation of the penitent, in the uprooting of evil propensities and the restraining of evil habits. Shall I explain my meaning by a similitude. Behold, the sacred door-keeper of heaven is always represented with two keys. Now just as a casket which is strongly secured has two locks, and therefore can only be opened by a double key, so is the kingdom of heaven, "which is like unto a treasure hid" (S. Matt. xiii. 44); and it requires its two keys in order that admittance may be gained into it. God holds the one key, which He uses when He unlocks the heart by the exercise of His grace; and man holds the other key, which he uses when he works out his own salvation with fear and trembling. We learn then that contrition does

not consist in making a confession and receiving absolution, but in mortification of the passions, in a never ceasing wrestling with sin. These bitter tears of S. Peter show us most clearly, if they show us anything at all, that it is absolutely necessary for a real and deep repentance, that wicked affections, the occasions of, and the lurking inclinations to sin, be rooted out from the soul by the stern discipline of mortification. Expressions of sorrow for sin will avail us nothing whilst the evil habit is still indulged in, or the past excesses of guilt looked back upon with a fond regret. No! the offending right eye or right hand must be plucked out or cut off, if these members are still the servants of iniquity.

III. *True contrition destroys the root of sin.*—We learn a lesson as to the rooting out by a continual repentance of the remnants of our former sins, which, still abiding in the soul, are as seeds or germs of future guilt, from the conduct of David in his encounter with Goliath. In this seemingly unequal contest David showed himself to be as prudent as he was brave. He had smitten the Philistine, and “the stone sunk into his forehead, and he fell upon his face to the earth.” (1 Sam. xvii. 49.) The victory was gained; the champion of the enemy

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of Israel had fallen, but David was in no haste to return to the camp to receive from his people the praise that was his due. He wished to make all sure before he considered his danger to be over; so we read, "David ran, and stood upon the Philistine, and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off his head therewith." (1 Sam. xvii. 51.) Was this bloody and extra labour done by David for the sake of enhancing his triumph? By no means; the natural modesty of David at once negatives such a thought. It was a labour caused by his prudent fear that, perhaps after all, Goliath might be only stunned by the stone, and that he might recover consciousness again by and by, and that therefore it behoved him to guard against any such termination of the affray.

O Christian soul! who can promise you any security, although your sin may be confessed and heartily repented of, if the old evil affections and habits revive, or if they have never been thoroughly rooted out of the soul? Come nearer; the old man of sin, though fallen, may yet arise: come, put thy foot upon him, and leave him not until thou hast smitten off his head. David feared Goliath even when he was lying upon the ground. The sinner is warned

in like manner that he should fear sin. "Be not without fear about sin forgiven." (Ecclus. v. 5.) Wherefore? Because, as S. Bernard says, there is need to cut off the head of evil habit in order to gain a complete victory. It is well known that trees and plants, if they are merely cut down, and not pulled up by their roots, after a time put forth a new growth of stem, branches, and leaves. It is just the same with evil habits and affections; unless they are plucked out of the soul root and branch new sins soon appear as the product of the remaining "root of bitterness," and this happens even when the branches of former sins have been cut off by a true repentance. As if from a certain root other sins of a like kind spring up, so it becomes necessary to destroy the root if the soul is to be freed from the sin.

IV. *The vitality of indwelling sin.*—The internal and inveterate propensity of the soul is a faculty so strong, so violent, and so full of life, that it cannot be conquered by any mere act of repentance alone, but only by a watchful and earnest purpose of modification. S. Augustine in one of his sermons dwells very strongly on this point of continual mortification, as the only companion to a true repentance; and he instances the case of a man who, being addicted

to the habits of intemperance before his baptism, fell away into the old vice by degrees after it. "Believe me," exclaims S. Bernard, "that which is pruned shoots out again, and things avoided return, things quenched are often re-kindled, and the stunned are again awakened." What is the reason of all this? Only that which applies to the evil habit and inveterate affection, and which teaches us that whilst the seeds of life remain in them they must sooner or later spring up into a fresh growth. Nothing short of a death unto sin can secure the abiding effect of repentance. Satan does not mind any temporal or external sorrow for sin; he knows full well that transient emotions will soon die out, and that if the occasions of sin are still left in the heart they must in time bring forth their fruit unto death. There are two passages in Holy Scripture which prove this sad truth beyond a doubt. The first we take is from the Prophet Job, who says of the wicked man, "He buildeth his house as a moth." (Job xxvii. 18.) By the moth is signified the spirit of evil, who makes the heart of the sinner his dwelling, as in our Blessed Lord's parable the wicked spirit says, "I will return into my house whence I came out." (S. Luke xi. 24.) Holy Job does not call this

sinful object a lion, a tiger, or a bear, or any other of the beasts of prey who outwardly attack man; but he likens it to the moth, which eats into the wood or heart of a tree, and destroys its pith, causes it to wither and die, whilst the outward sign of the inward mischief is very slight, if it be at all noticeable. This is just as the devil acts. He does not mind how much outward signs of penitence there may be, what fastings, almsgivings, and the like are practised, if so be that the roots of sin be left in the soul. The other text which throws so much light upon this matter is supplied by the Psalmist, who says, "The wicked walk on every side" (Ps. xii. 8), that is, in a circle; they return again and again to the same place whence they started. It is an attribute of sinners to make no advance; to rotate, to gyrate, and to revolve in a circle which has no limit. O sinner! why dost thou not escape from the defilement of wickedness? He answers, I do indeed purpose to go away from it. Why do you not flee from the great danger of the sinful occasion? I will escape from it, he says. But in the meantime he does nothing else towards attaining his salvation than making a confession of, or a lamentation over, his sin, to which, as the impression wears off, like a

sow returning to her wallowing in the mire, he goes back again. What is this, save "to walk on every side;" in a circle gravitating round some central attraction, some source of sin which still retains all its old vigour and life?

V. *Contrition implies prudence.*—Oh! how often do men, by a feeling of contrition and a humbling sorrow for sin, cast the devil out of their hearts? But the enemy, so full of wiles, laughs the more at this transitory repentance; for he knows how easily he can effect a return thither. Satan does very much with the soul what Gabriel Inchinus relates concerning Pompejus, who, when about to take possession of a certain city, made use of the following stratagem:—He asked the citizens to receive into their city his sick and wounded soldiers, to which request the citizens kindly gave their assent; which soldiers were no sooner recovered, than they flew to arms again, and suddenly besieging the guards, they opened the gates to Pompejus. What was the cause of this misfortune? In truth, it was because the townsmen were not sufficiently prudent; they did not properly guard and restrain the sick soldiers, who thus betrayed their city. Now this is the very self-same thing that the devil does. He is quite content, so long as the remaining

sinful affections, the old desires, the former remembrances of sin are allowed to remain in the soul, because he knows full well that in his own good time he shall be able to regain possession of that soul. O, Christian soul, the evil desires still lurking within you, these are the wounded soldiers! they will soon contrive your utter ruin, if they are allowed to remain in the heart.

VI. *S. Peter an example of real contrition.*—Let us learn to conquer not only the sins themselves, but the effects and consequences of sin. Trust in no repentance and contrition which does not embrace a mortification of all your old passions and lusts. The lost have often been penitents; the lost have often been in deep contrition on account of past sin. Why are they now in hell? Because they allowed these seeds of evil, these germs of future wickedness, to abide still in their hearts, and so they have again and again fallen away from grace.

Let us follow the example which S. Peter set us after his fall; he ever “wept bitterly,” as one ever in danger; he wept, lest sin should again gain its former dominion over him; he wept, as ever keeping his sin before him.

S. JAMES THE APOSTLE.

THE LAW OF FORGIVENESS.

“They say unto Him, We are able.”—*S. Matt. xx. 22.*

I. *The lesson of the death of S. James.*—When King David meditated upon the many mercies which God had so graciously bestowed upon him, he eagerly inquired of himself, “What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards me?” And then he noted that nothing was more suitable to his gratitude, that nothing was more acceptable to God, than to love his enemies; and he came to the conclusion that he desired, for the love of God, to drink the cup of pardon, of persecutions, injuries, calumnies, and of all other injuries. “I will take,” he resolves, “the cup of salvation,” (*Ps. cxvi. 13*); that cup, as S. Ambrose explains it, of which our Blessed Lord spake to His two disciples when He asked them, “Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of?” (*S. Matt. xx. 22.*) Now sinners, against every command of

the Lord, oppose many difficulties, objections, and excuses, but they most frequently bring forward their own inability to keep the precept as an apology for their transgression of it;—their cry is ever, “I cannot, I cannot.” Is not this very often said by us, when we are bidden in Jesus Christ’s name to forgive? When we reflect how many mercies, thousands upon thousands, that we receive from the bountiful hand of our heavenly and merciful Father, we ought indeed to learn to say with the two apostles of the Gospel, “We are able.” God has bidden us love our enemies, therefore “We are able.” God, by His own example, showed men how to do so, therefore “We are able.” God urges this command upon us by the threat of eternal punishment in case of our disobedience to it, therefore “We are able.”

Oh! how emphatically has S. James the Apostle, by his own noble example, impressed upon our hearts this law of forgiveness, which is indeed the one great lesson of his holy death. S. James the Great was preaching in Jerusalem, when certain centurions of the Roman army raised and concerted commotion amongst the people against him, and laying the blame of the sedition upon the disciple of Jesus Christ, they had him, by means of false

witnesses, cast into prison. Amongst these centurions was a certain man named Josias, who was amongst the first to bind S. James, and he also brought him before Herod. Without any formality of a legal trial being gone through, Herod sentenced this noble disciple of the Lord at once to death. But mark! As S. James was being led forward to execution, his wicked accuser was standing by, and this wretched man having been struck by the testimony which the apostle had borne to the faith before the judgment-seat, fell down at the knees of the apostle and asked his pardon. Did S. James forgive? What did he do? Considering a little while, he replied, "Peace be to thee," and then he kissed him, and forgave him freely and entirely. The sequel to the story is a sad one indeed. Josias having confessed himself to be a Christian, the envy of the Jews was so excited against him, that they procured at once a capital sentence against him, and the betrayer was made a partaker of the glory of martyrdom with the betrayed; as Eusebius tells us; "both were beheaded at the same time." The martyrdom of S. James furnishes us with the subject of our meditation, that forgiveness which is commanded by our Blessed Lord to be fulfilled by us for three reasons.

II. *Jesus Christ commanded us to forgive.*—

In the first place, to love our enemies is neither difficult nor impossible, for we are commanded to do so by the positive command of Jesus Christ, and “His commandments are not grievous.” (1 S. John v. 3.) In the old law there was a command given to love one’s neighbour, by whom was understood one’s friend, whilst it was allowed to hate an enemy; and therefore the Son of God became Incarnate, and He promulgated as a most stringent law the love of enemies: “Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy (Deut. xxiii. 6); but I say unto you, Love your enemies.” (S. Matt. v. 43, 44.) If all other motives for so doing be absent, this one ought to be sufficient to bind Christians to this love: it is a positive command of Jesus Christ, and He is my God, my Father, my Benefactor, my exceeding great Reward. The stars in the heaven, the elements upon earth, and all the creatures in the theatre of the universe, obey the laws of God, and shall I alone dispute His commands? shall I only pretend that He bids me do what is an impossibility?

Joseph’s brethren persecuted him to the extremity of hatred: they placed him in the pit

to die ; they sold him into slavery. But when Jacob died, the brothers feared that Joseph would avenge their former treatment of him, and they knew no better way of appealing to his clemency than by calling to their aid the memory of their common father. These brethren came before the throne of Joseph, and said : " Thy father did command before he died, saying, So shall ye say unto Joseph : Forgive I pray thee now the trespass of thy brethren and their sin." (Gen. v. 16, 17.) And what happened ? He allowed that desire of his father as interceding for them ; he banished every offence from his mind, and received his wicked brethren as his dear friends. " Fear not, for am I in the place of God ? Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good : now therefore, fear ye not." (Gen. l. 19-21.) My Christian ! you unduly complain of the injuries which you have received at the hand of some supposed enemy. Granted, all angry feeling ought quickly to be banished from your mind ; for Jesus Christ, your Lord, has given you incomparably more blessings than ever Jacob gave to his son Joseph, and He, both living and dying, bade you " Love your enemies." A quarrel is often made up by the gentle words of some mediating friend, and

shall we grant to him that which we refuse to Jesus Christ.

Lastly. Remark that our Blessed Lord did not give this command as desiring ill to any one, but He gave it for your good, and as an expression of His own great mercy toward you. "But I say unto you." These words have sustained thousands of martyrs, and enabled them to rejoice under the severest sufferings, and are you unable to bear forgivingly a few stinging words?

III. *Jesus Christ showed us how to forgive.*—To love our enemies is not difficult, since we are incited to it by the example of the patient Jesus. I ask what other grace, during the whole course of His earthly life, did the Incarnate Son of God more commend by His own example than forgiveness? Why did Jesus Christ come down from heaven? Was it not that He might reconcile us, who were enemies to God by wicked works, to Him? What did He do in the manger at Bethlehem? King Herod there sought His life, and He was able "to send by one word a shower of fire, as upon Sodom, or to inflict any other bitter punishment." (S. Greg. Naz.) Yet He would not do so. If some take exception that the Lord of Glory was but now a babe, let them look at His

maturer years. The scribes, the Pharisees, the doctors of the law, and the rulers of the synagogues were His bitterest enemies; they blackened His fame, they cast Him out of their cities, they excited the people against Him, they sought by false witnesses to put Him to death. And what did our Blessed Lord do on the other hand against them? Let S. Peter reply in a few words. "When He was reviled, reviled not again, when He suffered, threatened not." (1 S. Pet. ii. 23.) There was not a tinge of vindictive feeling in our Blessed Lord.

For how long did Jesus Christ love these His ungrateful enemies? I answer until His death. It is held by all theologians that our Blessed Lord could have chosen His own kind of death. Upon one occasion the Jews in their rage took "up stones to cast at Him, but Jesus hid Himself." (S. John viii. 59.) Why did He not consent to die thus? Let S. Chrysostom answer. "The Saviour of the world reserved some of His most important teaching for His last hour; just that teaching which He desired to be most impressed upon the hearts of men; this doctrine could not be spoken during the tumult of stoning; it could be, and was delivered during the tranquil death upon the cross. Now what were these last and most solemn

commands? They embraced amongst other topics the love of enemies, which the Son of God specially commended by His example, by praying to His heavenly Father with the last sobs of His dying soul, "Father forgive them." (S. Luke xxiii. 24.) Jesus Christ was unwilling to be stoned, and He desired to be crucified, that these words might be heard, "Father, forgive them."

Do you, O Christian, whenever angry thoughts arise within you against any one, raise the eyes of your soul to the Crucified One, and ask yourself, "Can what is fitting for God be unbecoming in the servant of God?" (Pet. Bless.) You say that the cause of your anger is just. Be it so! I do not approve of the other's wickedness, but I say to you with S. Augustine, Dost thou desire to avenge thyself? Behold Him hanging, and hear Him praying, "Father, forgive them." Consider whether you have been as badly treated as was Jesus Christ by His enemies, by whom He was mocked, spit upon, beaten, nailed to the cross.

Come therefore, O Christian, when the spirit of strife excites you to unloving thoughts, then turn them upon Jesus hanging on the cross, and He will cool all your anger. Do not make that most weak excuse, that Jesus Christ was

God, therefore it was no wonder that He exhibited such excellent graces ; for in that case, I immediately ask with S. Augustine, “ Can it disgrace a Christian to do what Jesus Christ has done ? ”

IV. *Jesus Christ will punish those who forgive not.*—Lastly, we are urged to the exercise of this grace of forgiveness, by the punishment with which Jesus Christ threatens the unforgiving. Now what is the punishment which is divinely decreed in an especial way against the unforgiving ? It is that they who deny forgiveness to others cannot hope for forgiveness themselves at the hands of God. “ If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses.” (S. Matt. vi. 14.)

Oh, Christian ! Of what a large number of sins art thou guilty, by which most contumeliously thou hast offended against the divine Majesty. Then I will have you know that you must first forgive, ere you will be forgiven by God.

You may fast to emaciation ; give all your goods to the poor ; and adore God for a long night on bended knees ; but whilst you cherish an unforgiving and unloving heart, you will not obtain the grace of God. This was the case

with the Jews. They were finally rejected, in spite of all their alms-givings, fastings, and other service; hence they asked, "Wherefore have we fasted and Thou seest not, have we afflicted our soul and Thou takest no knowledge?" (Isa. lviii. 3.) But mark! God immediately explained why it was so: "Ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness." (Id. v. 4.) Dissensions and heart-burning weaken prayer, and render a man unworthy of divine grace.

But this loss is a light one when it is compared with the very heavy one which follows upon it; for he who is unloving in thought shall, in the coming eternity, obtain neither pardon nor grace.

S. Matthew describes at length certain heavenly nuptials; and of the ten virgins (S. Matt. xxv. 2) five were prudent, their lamps were burning when the bridegroom came, and they went in with him into the marriage feast. The doors were then shut, and the five other virgins from without pleaded, and pleaded in vain, for admittance. For what fault were they excluded? For the want of oil. Their lamps burned for a little while, and then they went out, for the oil in them failed. A forgiving spirit is represented by this oil; and he who has

his lamp empty will surely be excluded from the kingdom of heaven. There are many Christians who are sufficiently loving and forgiving towards their friends, their domestics, their benefactors ; but since their love and forgiveness is not universal, they will be found to be unworthy to be admitted to the sight and presence of the bridegroom.

V. *Our power of forgiveness.*—Consider now, from all that has been said, O Christian, and learn for yourself what you ought to do. A forgiving spirit must be cherished by you ; it is the enemy, the injurer as well as the neighbour and the friend who must be both forgiven and loved. If you place before me a thousand objections against forgiveness, and tell me that to love an injurer is very difficult, is something unbearable, is inconsistent with your nature, and the like, I reply that it is an infinitely greater difficulty, a thing infinitely more unbearable and much more repugnant to our true nature to be shut out from heaven for ever. “I am not able ! I am not able !” is your cry. Alas ! you deceive yourself. Be of good hope and courage, of firm resolve, and say rather with the apostles in this day’s Gospel, “We are able.” This is what Jesus Christ bids you do : “Love them which persecute you ;”

and He says this as a wise Legislator, Who Himself loves you well. Jesus Christ says this as a patient Master; He says it again as a Judge, who threatens if you obey not His righteous command.

Oh ! would that the time were sufficient, and then I would gladly bring forward the example of the Saints and of pious Christians of all the ages of the Church, and prove to you that beyond any doubt you can show this love to all; that under its blessed influence to have an enemy even becomes an impossibility; that all men, the good and the bad, are worthy of your love and sympathy; that in this respect grace can triumph over nature. The dying lesson of S. James's forgiveness is one that each one of you can and must learn: for "God is love; and he that loveth abideth in God, and God in him."

S. BARTHOLOMEW THE APOSTLE.

THE FEWNESS OF THE SAVED.

“He chose twelve, whom also He named apostles . . . Philip and Bartholomew.”—*S. Luke* vi. 13, 14.

I. *The two elections.*—So S. Bartholomew was elected to be of the number of the twelve apostles ; and it is but just that with our whole heart we should rejoice in the holy apostles whom in our text our Lord Jesus Christ elected to be His intimate friends, the pillars of His Church, the preachers of His faith, and the senators of His heavenly court. Happy election ! to which most deservedly we can apply the words of the Psalmist : “He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill ; that He may set him with princes, even with the princes of His people.” (Ps. cxiii. 7, 8.) Happy S. Bartholomew ! to be so numbered amongst the elect. “Philip and Bartholomew !” Yet not without good cause does this gladsome election dispose me to anxious thought, when I reflect that from

the multitudes of the whole world only seventy were called to be disciples, and that out of these seventy disciples only twelve were elected into the apostolate. "He chose twelve." Give me your attention, O hearers, whilst I unfold the solicitude which this fact brings to my soul.

This election very strongly brings another election before my mind, and in these who are now called out of the world, and marked with peculiar grace, I see a type of those whom God has destined by His final election for eternal glory. Now just as the number of the apostles is very small indeed, when compared with the whole number of the disciples of Jesus Christ, so a more startling contrast must be made, when the small number of the saved is compared with the large—nay, almost infinite—number of those who will be finally shut out from the kingdom of heaven. Upon this Festival of S. Bartholomew, a chosen apostle, we will direct your thoughts for a little season to the fewness of the saved; seek to inquire into the reason of this condition of things, and show you how such thoughts should lead you to a wholesome fear concerning your own salvation.

II. *The gate of heaven is a most narrow*

one.—King Solomon built, in his very magnificent Temple, a certain peculiar place which was called, from its special sanctity, “the Holy of holies.” It was in this chamber or division of the Temple that the ark of the covenant, with its mercy-seat and cherubims, was preserved and carefully guarded against any intrusion. Now, although the Temple was finished with the widest doors, and access to the holy place was easily gained, this innermost sanctuary had but one small entrance: “For the entering of the oracle he made doors of olive tree, and he carved upon them carvings of cherubims and palm trees and open flowers, and overlaid them with gold.” (1 Kings vi. 31, 32.) Why was the holy place so abundantly finished with large doors, whilst the Holy of holies had but one small entrance? Why are there doors of olive tree, which are called little doors to distinguish them from the other large doors of the Temple, made so small? Because this Temple of Solomon was intended to be a type of the Church of God: the holy place, the large chamber, representing the Church militant—the most holy place, the interior sanctuary, the Church triumphant. The exterior Temple, or the Church militant, is well furnished with very large doors, for innumerable is the

number of men who will enter into it; but the true sanctuary for the Church triumphant, has but a small entrance, because few will enter in by it. Although there is a most full and ample access to the Church militant, the entrance to the Church triumphant is narrow indeed. Our Blessed Lord Himself said, "narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." (S. Matt. vii. 14.) Is there no cause for anxiety in such a thought as this? Does it not lead us to ask, What must I do that I may enter in at this narrow doorway? The passion of S. Bartholomew answers this question. Whilst preaching the Gospel in the Indies, he was called upon to wear the crown of martyrdom by the most painful of all deaths, for he was flayed alive. As this noble sufferer for the faith put off his old nature by torture, so must we do the same thing spiritually, by divine grace: we must cast off the skin of old inveterate habit; the pride of life must be put down; the soul must be humbled, for whilst it is inflated with pride and laden with sin it cannot pass through the narrow doorway into the Church triumphant. If amongst Christians, pride is common and humility is rare, what is the wonder, asks S. Gregory, if while so many come to the faith, so very few attain to the

kingdom of heaven? The elect are so few, because so few even of Christians are saved. And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? (1 S. Pet. iv. 18.) The narrow entrance to the "Holy of Holies" is thus no unapt type of the gate of heaven.

III. *The teaching of our Blessed Lord upon this subject.*—It was once asked of our Blessed Lord, "are there few that be saved" (S. Luke xiii. 23), to which question He replied, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." It seems from these words that our Blessed Lord did not give a direct answer to the question before Him, or say whether they were few or many who would be saved; but the inference to be drawn without any doubt from His teaching is, that each one should rather for himself "strive" to enter into the kingdom than vainly concern himself as to whether the number who do so be many or few. Yet in one sense the question was solved by our Lord. "The Lord confirmed what He had heard, that is to say, that there are few who will be saved, since many will seek in vain to enter in through the narrow gate." (S. Aug.) For just as those who may be walking over a

very narrow bridge easily slip into the water, unless they walk very warily and carefully, so when the Lord called that a narrow gate through which we enter into eternal life, He wished to indicate that there were many who would turn aside because of the narrowness of the way. This is the view which S. Gregory the Great takes of this question. Now, as any one who desires to swim across a stream makes up his mind to contend with the waves, so does our Blessed Lord command us to wrestle and to strive whilst we are crossing over the rough and troubled waters of this world's life. This very command implies a limitation; it points out how few they are who attain to glory, because they are so very few who contend with the waves of this world, and with the storms of desire and sin. Jesus Christ assumed the entrance into heaven to be by a narrow gate, and therefore He bade men "strive;" for it is by fervent striving alone that we can avoid being overcome by the billows of the world, by which the mind is ever depressed to the lowest depths.

IV. *The wickedness of this world.*—O Christians! how few, how very few there are amongst us who strive as we ought to do. Alas! wickedness rules with an almost irre-

sistible force in the world. O! would that it were lawful for us to ascend that mountain, into which of old S. Cyprian longed to climb with his dear friend Donatus. "Imagine yourself for some short time to have been removed to the summit of some lofty mountain, and witness from thence the aspect of human things as they lie spread beneath you; cast your eyes hither and thither, and mark the turmoils of this billowy world, yourself meanwhile being free from the contact with earth." (S. Cyp.) O! look at the world with an impartial eye, and you will behold not without tears the things which are done on land and on water, in the palaces of princes, in the cottages of the poor, in the public highways, in the tribunals of the judges. You will see on every side lies, injuries, frauds, thefts, perjuries, envyings, and flatteries, and all these joined to a forgetfulness of God and an utter recklessness of our own salvation. You will see men who lead a more degraded life than the beasts which perish, destitute alike of law, justice, and reason; multitudes living as if there was for man no other lot, save to be born first and to perish afterwards. You will see that power prevails over innocence, that the just are oppressed by the wicked, that the humble are despised by

the foolish. You will see the sale of venal rights, truth derided, modesty shunned, frauds perpetually committed, offices badly administered, and the whole condition of man to be corrupt. You will see that money has become the mistress of the world, that no one is careful save for his own special gain, that the favours of the great are obtained by cunning against all that is just and right. Lastly, you will see what S. Cyprian so deplores, that laws will be framed to sanction sin, and what is common in vice, in time to become lawful. O times! O manners! Are all these gigantic evils rife amongst Christians? Are they to be found in our own Christian country? What wonder then that so many perish rather than are saved, since everywhere the paths of sin are trodden by so great a multitude?

V. *Very many are Christians in name only.*—What can I say, but that the larger number of Christians are only so in name, that they are not truly Christians in themselves. “Look that thou make them after their pattern” (Exod. xxv. 40), was God’s command of old to Moses, when He gave His instructions concerning the ark, and the other furniture of the tabernacle. And these same words are spoken to each of us by our Blessed Lord, who left us an example or

pattern that we should follow His steps (1 S. Pet. ii. 21), and order our lives upon the model of His own. The life of Jesus Christ is a pattern life, and therefore each Christian should seek to imitate the several graces of the Lord and Saviour, just as when we learn to write we take a copy, and try to imitate it in the formation of our letters. "Our books should be written after the pattern of the Book of Life." (Hug. S. Vic.) If we would plainly understand this, let us recall the interior of a printer's workshop, and note how the printer of a book arranges the form of his type according to the size of the book which he is going to print; and then when the type is set up it is read off, the letters wrongly inserted or misplaced are rearranged, until the printed text agrees as nearly as possible with the manuscript which it represents. O my Christian soul! God in His great mercy grants you life, that you may set up in your hearts those letters, that type, which will express the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. "Look, O look! that thou make them after their pattern." Conceive for a moment of a Christian alphabet in which every letter stands as the representative of some Christ-like grace, and then stamp by prayer and practice these characters indelibly upon your souls. If then thou hast

departed from, or erased any of these letters, be thou noble in thy soul and repent, since this error can be corrected by sincere repentance before the book of thy life is wholly and unalterably set up. Truly, alas ! amongst very many Christians is found a life of arrant deformity, and every kind of vice in the stead of virtue and the other Christian graces. And what wonder is it that this should be so ? that more from amongst the number of Christians should be lost than saved ; for God will admit no one into the eternal tabernacles of heaven, save those alone whom He has predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son.

VI. *Conclusion.*— Since, then, these sad things are so, who is, who can be so foolish, as to be willing to trifle with the many rather than to act wisely with the few ? It is a narrow path which leads to eternal life, and the portal of salvation is narrow too. That we may be able to enter in by it, we must remember that as S. Bartholomew suffered the loss of his skin, and endured the severest agonies of which our nature is capable, so must we with him be content to lose the skin of our old man, by putting him off with his deeds, curing ourselves of our old habits, indulgences, and follies, and in place of this

“put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness;” (Eph. iv. 24.) Remembering that not every one that saith unto Jesus Christ, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but only he who doeth the will of that Father Who is in heaven.

S. MATTHEW THE APOSTLE.

PROCRASTINATION.

“Follow Me.”—*S. Matt.* ix. 9.

I. *The Call of S. Matthew.*—S. Matthew held an important post under the Roman governor of Judæa: he was a farmer of the public taxes; he was full of secular business; but the Lord met with him as he sat “at the receipt of custom, and He saith unto him, Follow Me; and he arose and followed Him.” He loved the Lord from His voice, or look, or manner, and “love brooks no delay.” From that moment his public post, his worldly calling, his social ties were as nothing to S. Matthew; he hesitated not even for a moment, he wasted no time, he did at once and on the instant that which his soul told him it was a right thing for him to do. It was at Capernaum that Jesus Christ “said unto another, Follow Me; but he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father” (*S. Luke* ix. 59); to tend him during the declining years of his life, and

afterwards I will follow Thee." The contrast between this other disciple (whose name both S. Matthew and S. Luke withhold out of tender consideration) and S. Matthew is indeed a most marked one: S. Matthew had good reason, if any one had, for pleading for a delay, yet he put in no such plea; he was ready to obey on the instant, and so he gives to the Church an example for all time against putting off duty which ought at once to be fulfilled: the moral of his example is, do not procrastinate; the cause which led to his promptness being that "love brooks no delay."

Procrastination is not only the thief of time, it is the thief of energy, of resolution, of will, of purpose, of everything that makes a man great in this world, and diligent and obedient in his service towards God.

II. *The promptitude of our Blessed Lord.*—All God's servants have been prompt and ready in action; and in this respect, as in every other, our dear Lord came and showed himself to us as our example.

Firstly. There was no procrastination in His Resurrection. Our Blessed Lord often spoke about His Death and His Resurrection some time before they came to pass, and one of His most remarkable predictions was contained in

the words, that "as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." (S. Matt. xii. 40.) How were these words fulfilled when our Blessed Lord was but two nights in the tomb—the nights of our Friday and Saturday? How, when S. Paul adds, that Jesus "rose according to the Scriptures?" (1 Cor. xv. 4.) The general explanation which is given by the great Fathers of the Church is, that Jesus Christ spake by a figure of speech called *synecdoche*, by which a part is taken for the whole. (SS. Augustine, Jerome, Theophylact, Bede, and others.) According to S. Thomas Aquinas, our Blessed Lord originally intended to remain for three whole nights "in the heart of the earth." Be it so. Why did He then hasten His Resurrection? Jesus Christ saw His disciples heart-broken, desolate, and afflicted. "His bowels yearned for His brethren" after the flesh, and each hour that He was away from them seemed to be a thousand years. His love could not bear to wait for the full three days and three nights before He saw them again, and so He broke the bands of death and of inactivity; His burning love towards His disciples caused Him to reduce

the three days and nights to the "little while" of His discourse. His very Resurrection and this prophecy of it, was a protest against procrastination; it was a practical commentary upon the old proverb: "Love brooks no delay."

Secondly. There was no procrastination in His Incarnation. In the Consistory of the Blessed Trinity, it was determined to send a heavenly messenger to the Virgin Mary, announcing that, without her consent, she was chosen to be the Mother of God. The angel came, calling her "Highly favoured!" and he afterwards added, "the Lord is with thee." (S. Luke ii. 28.) How? "The Lord is not only with thee in power, presence, and essence, as He is with us all, for 'in Him we live, and move, and have our being' (Acts xvii. 28); not only with thee by grace as He is with the faithful, but He is with thee in an especial and particular way, since, by His taking our flesh, the body which was united with His Divinity was formed out of the very substance of the Virgin Mary, His mother." (Stella.) Why did not God expect an answer to His messenger? Because the angel did not say, "the Lord *will* be with thee: prepare a dwelling-place for Him; cleanse the marriage-chamber of your heart;" but His speech proves

that all these things were prepared beforehand, and that the Lord had actually come before His messenger. "The Lord is with thee" (Stella), "and already He who was sending the angel was present with the Virgin." (S. Jerome.) "How could He Who had sent the angel be found by him to be with the Virgin? God had come quicker than the angel, that He might come to the earth more speedily than the hastening messenger." (S. Bernard.) Why was this great haste? What caused this Incarnation? It was love; a love that made Jesus Christ so ready to come to His human mother, for His love to our lost and ruined race brooked no delay.

Thirdly. There was no procrastination in His forgiveness. The parable of the prodigal son reveals the exceeding promptness of the Lord to forgive the penitent. When the poor prodigal came to himself, in the depth of his misery and destitution, he vowed to say three things to his Father—to utter two confessions, and then to make a petition. He comes to his father. He makes his confession: "I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." (S. Luke xv. 21.) He had no time to prefer the request which He

had planned: "make me as one of thy hired servants," for his father said at once: "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him." There was no reproach—no asking of him, "Where have you been? Whence come you? Where is the inheritance which you took away with you? Why is it that you changed so great glory into shame? (S. Pet. Crys.) No; the time was too valuable to be wasted in reproaches and lamentations over the past. The father did not as a loving parent restrain himself or repress his love; he was towards this poor prodigal as God is towards ourselves—ever ready to help our infirmities and to supply our wants. The command given to his servants was a pledge of his instant forgiveness and compassion. The love of Jesus Christ for penitent sinners brooks no delay in its expression.

Fourthly. There was no procrastination in His answer to prayer. The prayer of the penitent thief was granted on the instant. This poor criminal wished to gain heaven at the last moment of his life, and so he prayed: "Jesus, Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." (S. Luke xxiii. 42.) He spake as one between life and death, who hardly knew whether he was dead or alive; yet

as one sufficiently conscious to dread a future, he prayed for the future. "Remember me"—as though the Lord of every thought could be forgetful—"when Thou comest." The actions of God are not to be measured by time ; things past, present, and future are ever present with Him—"into Thy kingdom." Living, O thief, thou hast been the slave of the devil, and dying, dost thou presume to reign in the kingdom of heaven, and dost thou hope for the sceptre, kingdom, and crown? The entire prayer speaks of a future; but the crucified Saviour answered for the present: "To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." He says not, when I shall come, but "to-day"—suddenly as the stroke of the eyelid he passed into heaven. (S. Augustine.) He delays not the time at all, not even for a day: in that hour itself in which heaven received its Lord, it received also the penitent thief. "To-day," said our dear Lord to him; as if He had said, "Oh! My faithful companion, and only witness of this My great triumph, why dost thou so earnestly pray to Me, as if thou rememberest thyself in the day of judgment alone? Why dost thou hide thee from the present retribution which has been so long prepared for thee? Why dost thou importune Me that hereafter thy

faith may be perfected? To-day, to-day, I say unto thee. (Euseb. Eniss.) The love which exists between us allows of no procrastination, it will not admit of any postponement; so not to-morrow, but 'to-day thou shalt be with Me.'" "Love brooks no delay."

III. *Scriptural illustrations of promptitude.*—
Firstly. The Mission of Eliezar to Mesopotamia. Abraham sends his trusty servant to his own country and kindred, with the ten camels laden with presents. Rebekah meets him at the well by Bethuel's house, draws for his cattle, and brings him into the house, and then he says, "I will not eat until I have told mine errand." (Gen. xxiv. 33.) All things prosper with him: Rebekah consents to go with him; and "Her mother and her brother said, Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at the least ten, after that she shall go." (Id. ver. 55.) This was a request both natural and reasonable; but Eliezar, without disputing this, says: "Hinder me not, seeing the Lord hath prospered my way" (Id. 56); and so they left at once. The fidelity of the servant was impatient of any procrastination. "Love brooks no delay."

Secondly. The Institution of the Passover. God had in His mercy determined to deliver His chosen people of Israel out of the "iron

furnace" (Jer. xi. 4) of Egypt, and Moses was bidden to be exact in the following of God's commands, and especially in the matter of the Passover. The Paschal lamb was not to be eaten raw, "nor sodden at all with water; but roast with fire." Now, if the taste of the Hebrews was alone consulted, they might have prepared the lamb as they should choose. We dress for others, but we eat for ourselves. This was not so, for it was to be eaten "with your loins girded;" even this was not sufficient, so it is added: "your shoes on your feet;" still another direction is given: "and your staff in your hand;" even with all quickness: "ye shall eat it in haste." (Exod. xii. 8-12). Now, every command was the effect of that divine love which is impatient of delay. It implied speed. The roast lamb is soon prepared; the girded loins are meet for walking; the shod feet are protected from any thorns or obstacles likely to hinder the journey; the staff to quicken the pace is not forgotten. "From the mysterious commands of God the Redeemer, learn with quickness the joys of the heavenly country, and keep without delay the precepts of life." (S. Greg. Mag.) It was the disobedience of Israel that hindered the purposes of God's love in the wilderness. His intention was to deliver His

people in haste, for "Love brooks no delay."

IV. *All procrastination is to be avoided.*—The one great lesson which we learn from the call of S. Matthew is to shun this miserable sin of procrastination—this evil habit of putting off to some future time what may be done now. It was an old poetical saying: "Delay is dangerous." (Ovid.) Let the medical man delay his remedy but for a single hour, and the life may be often sacrificed. It is only when hot that the iron can be welded. The old Father of History once more said, that "the man who is in the habit of delaying is ever laden with troubles." Julius Cæsar said, that "the quickness of a moment had very much to do with the performance of great deeds." Napoleon I. said, that "he gained most of his victories by being only ten minutes in advance of his opponents." Cæsar's three words well express the secret of success in life: "I came, I saw, I conquered."

O waste not then the "little while" of this life's day. Delay not, idle not, tarry not: "The night cometh, when no man can work."

Delay not repentance, and providing for the soul's eternal needs. There is no delay in

Jesus Christ ;—He comes and helps and heals at once.

Seize upon the present ; use it well—holily and honestly ; turn it to its best account, and then leave the future wholly in the hands of God. Jesus Christ loves you beyond all price and measure, and He calls you, as He called S. Matthew, saying unto you, “Follow Me.” Oh ! arise and follow Him, forsaking all but Him. Follow Him at once, because He so loves you, since “Love brooks no delay.”

S. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS.

THE CHURCH MILITANT.

“There was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the Dragon.”—*Rev.* xii. 7.

I. *The two states of the Church.*—There is “a time of war, and a time of peace.” (*Eccles.* iii. 8.) The “time of war” is in this present time and world, for “the life of man upon earth is a warfare.” (*Job* vii. 1, *Vulg.*) The “time of peace” is in the future, and pertains to the Church triumphant, within the confines of which God hath placed peace. “My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation.” (*Isa.* xxxii. 18.) The “time of war” pertains to the Church militant, and S. John speaks of this war in the epistle for this high festival in which he shows to us the greatness of our helper. This “war in heaven” was chiefly waged after the devil was driven out of the hearts of men by the faith of Jesus Christ. “Now shall the prince of this world be cast out.” (*S. John* xii.

31.) As the war strikes us with fear, the greatness of our helper, who is "Michael and his angels," holds out hope by giving us consolation.

"Heaven" in this place signifies the Church militant; but why is the Church likened unto heaven?

II. *The Church a type of heaven.*—The Church militant in time, according to the state of grace in which the Father placed her and willed that she should remain, is properly called heaven for four reasons.

Firstly. Because the Church descends from heaven. S. John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven. (Rev. xxi. 2.) As a sculptor is said to form a likeness of any one, because of the form into which he wrought his marble, and not because of the material with which he works; so the Church militant, as far as her form is concerned, descended from heaven, and thence received her wisdom and power. "The Word of God on high is the fountain of wisdom" (Ecclus. i. 5); that is, He descended from heaven in order to instruct her. "One is your Master, even Christ" (S. Matt. xxiii. 8); He who teaches hearts on earth hath His seat in heaven. At the beginning of the Church,

when men were unlearned, they were manifestly taught of God. (Acts x. 15.) Therefore is the holy city said to descend from heaven, since that grace is heavenly by which God makes her to be able both to know and to will. That this grace comes from God is plain, since it is written, "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." (Acts i. 8.) The saints reckon themselves to stand by grace rather than by nature. "By the grace of God I am what I am." (1 Cor. xv. 10.)

Secondly. Because the Church tends towards heaven, there to abide without end, and in all her works she aims at heavenly things. It is of her that the promises are spoken, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (S. Matt. iii. 2; iv. 17.) The Saviour inaugurated the new law by the promise of the kingdom of heaven. (S. Matt. v. 3.) The synagogue was applying itself to those blessings which had been promised to it. "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land." (Isa. i. 19.)

Thirdly. Because the mind of the Church is turned towards heaven, she has her citizenship in heaven. "Our conversation is in heaven." (Phil. iii. 20.) The Apostle conversed with heaven by meditation, by desire, and by hope.

“We look not at the things which are seen.”
(2 Cor. iv. 18.)

Fourthly. Because the Church is likened to heaven according to that state in which the Saviour placed her, and willed that she should remain.

There are six particulars in which our dear Lord willed that the Church should resemble heaven.

In the first place, in sublimity. Heaven is a sublime place, so Jesus Christ desired His Church to exist in sublimity of life, and to be greatly withdrawn from earthly things. The Lord advocated, therefore, in an especial manner the contempt for the things of earth. “If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast.” (S. Matt. xix. 21.) “If any man come to Me, and hate not his father and mother, &c., he cannot be My disciple.” (S. Luke xiv. 26.) “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways” (Isa. lv. 8); which ways I both maintained Myself, and charged others to do so likewise, said that Saviour Who is the Wisdom of the Father, and Who wisely went forth for the uprooting of sin, laying the axe of preaching to the root of the evil, which is covetousness. “The love of money is the root of all evil.” (1 Tim. vi. 10.)

Whilst this love remains in the world the Church does not appear to be heaven, but rather earth, and to love riches not less, but even more than did the synagogue. "From the least of them even to the greatest of them, every one is given to covetousness." (Jer. vi. 13.)

Heaven is a high place, consisting of thin air or empyreum; therefore a philosopher said that before the body, in which there is diversity of light, there is something beyond in which there is uniformity of light. The first is heaven, in which are the fixed stars, that is the firmament, and that which is beneath it, where the planets are. The second is the empyreal heaven, what Jesus Christ desired His Church to be; a place of light, having the brightness of heavenly wisdom and the splendour of grace. For this purpose our dear Lord placed in His Church men, shining by the light of their teaching and their good example, to be as stars. "Among whom ye shine as lights in the world." (Phil. ii. 15.) "Ye are the light of the world." (S. Matt. v. 14.) Alas! at this time the light of heavenly wisdom is exchanged for that of earthly wisdom, which, like a phosphorescent glow, can only be seen in the night, in the time of darkness and of sin. When the

sun of understanding appears, the folly of earthly wisdom will be seen, and that many human institutions were evil, just as those of the scribes and Pharisees were exposed by our Lord.

In the second place, by the habitation of spiritual beings. Heaven is the dwelling-place of spiritual beings, and is that empyreum which was peopled with angels when it was created. These spirits spring from God alone, and not from one another. In like manner He willed the Church to be an habitation of spiritual men, who would serve and love Him, and not of carnal men, for "that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (S. John iii. 6.) At first the Church was the abode of spiritual persons. "Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh." (2 Cor. x. 3.) Since "they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. viii. 8), therefore they do not please Him. Hence the bishops and priests of God's Church are either most pleasing or most detestable to God; they may be the opponents to men's salvation, and they may do more harm than many devils. S. Peter was "blessed" when he recognised the divinity of the Lord; he was "Satan" when he tried to dissuade the Lord from enduring His Passion.

In the third place, by perfect obedience. Heaven is a place of perfect obedience as far as pertains to purity and content; for it God "made a decree which shall not pass." (Ps. cxlviii. 6.) "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." (S. Matt. vi. 10.) But the obedience of many in the Church waxes lax; order is subverted and discipline undermined, and as she becomes more and more insubordinate, she becomes more and more unlike heaven.

In the fourth place, by perfect concord. Heaven is a place of perfect concord. "He maketh peace in His high places." (Job xxv. 2.) Jesus Christ wished this concord to be preserved in His Church, but for the most part at this time the Church has fallen into a state of discord and dissension. The woven and undivided robe of the Saviour is torn up into many separate fragments, and the unity of the Body is sadly hindered. Earnest souls remembering their dear Lord's fervent prayer for the members of His Church, "that they may be all one, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us" (S. John xvii. 21), are even now striving to restore the mystical Body of the Lord to that condition of unity and concord which has its full exposition in the Church triumphant.

In the fifth place, by perfect ordination. Heaven is a place where the ordination or administration is perfect. There are the nine orders of angels, the nine assemblies most admirably arranged, agreeing in their special gifts whether they be of work or of contemplation. Three factors enter into the composition of perfect contemplation, to know, to love, and to rest. The seraphim are named from the excellency of love, the Cherubim from the excellency of knowledge, and the Thrones from the excellency of quiet or of rest. There is a two-fold manner of working; either by directing others, or in executing a ministry by direction and by labour. To the three middle orders of angels is assigned the duty of government. The Dominations have the power of administration over the angels, confirming them in good; the Principalities rule over changeable men either for good or ill; the Powers regulate obstinate or fallen angels for ill. Ministry pertains to the last grade of the angelical hierarchy. The powers perform wonderful deeds; the Archangels declare the most excellent mysteries; the Angels reveal secrets which are less valuable and momentous.

Our dear Lord desired the most perfect administration to hold in His Church. The three

orders of bishop, priest, and deacon are types of the orders of this angelic hierarchy. (S. Clem. Alex.) Alas for the disorder to be found in the Church! "The heaven for length, and the earth for depth" (Prov. xxv. 3); but the Church became more like earth than heaven now that her order is so far impaired; that which ought to be before is in her now put behind, "and went backward and not forward" (Jer. vii. 24), that which belonged to the left hand is given to the right. Many flee from and consider adversity to be the pain of punishment; and very many embrace the evil of sin, whilst they neglect their wounds because they fear the medicine of tribulation.

In the sixth place, by praise and thanksgiving. Thanksgiving and the voice of praise ever abound in heaven, and this was what Jesus Christ willed should be continually heard in His Church; but many who praise Him with their voice, blaspheme Him by their works. "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." (1 Cor. x. 31.) God is blasphemed by every and any excess, and in that case, however much the tongue may praise, the life blasphemes.

III. *The warfare of the Church.*—"There

was war in heaven," and the war was indeed a very great one.

Firstly, in duration. This great war began from the time of the promise, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman," (Gen. iii. 15,) and it will last till all the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever.

Secondly, in continuity. It never ceases;—there is neither rest nor pause in it. The flesh is ever and unceasingly lusting against the spirit; perpetual temptation is ever assailing us, and at last it overcomes us by our very weariness. With any rest we gain strength for a renewal of the combat; but this ceaseless strife wellnigh wears us out. Satan never sleeps, he is never weary. At all times and in all places "our adversary the devil as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." (S. Pet. v. 8.)

Thirdly, in the multitude of the combatants. "The dragon fought and his angels." The angels of the dragon are all they who consented to him when he said, "I will ascend into heaven; I will exalt my throne above the stars of God." (Is. xiv. 13.) (Haymo.) They may be not only these, but also all men who are captured in the snare of sins.

Fourthly, in the strength of those attacking. From the strength of both the attackers and the defenders this war must indeed be called great. Of Satan it is written : " Upon earth there is not his like, who is made without fear." (Job xli. 32.)

Fifthly, in the manifold operations of this war. From the variety in the modes of fighting, this war is great ; since our enemy attacks in an infinite number of ways, he employs a thousand arts of injuring, he uses various darts, he employs a multitude of snares.

IV. *The greatness of our helper.*—We might well be discouraged by the defections of the Church, and the vastness of this combat with sin, if we did not remember the greatness and power of our helper and defender. " Michael and his angels." As the angel said to Daniel, Michael was the head of the synagogue : " There is none that holdeth with me in these things but Michael your prince." (Dan. x. 21.) " In that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people." (Dan. xii. 1.) Perhaps it might be S. Michael of whom the Lord spoke when He said : " Behold I send an angel before thee to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared." (Exod. xxiii. 20.)

When the synagogue had crucified the Lord, Michael was translated, and became the head or prince of the Church. His angels are called guardian angels;—they defend us, either by restraining the devil, or by comforting us in temptation. This great helper, S. Michael, is also our consolation. What can we fear under so powerful a guard? To be either overcome or led away into sin? No; “the dragon and his angels” are not able to seduce men. It is well ordered for thee, O Mother Church, in this the place of thy sojourning. Michael came from heaven to earth to be thy help, thy succourer, and thy defender.

S. LUKE'S DAY.

THE GREAT REWARD.

“The labourer is worthy of his hire.”—*S. Luke x. 7.*

Introduction.—From the selection of these words, which are to be found in the holy Gospel for to-day, it is evident that the Church intended that they should be applied to S. Luke himself; that he is to be considered to be the honest and sincere labourer in the vineyard of the Lord, and as such to be “worthy of his hire,” which is nothing less than the reward of eternal glory. Now, there are four special spheres in which we with S. Luke are called to labour, and for which the crown of glory is held out as a fitting reward. These spheres of action represent certain graces of God the Holy Ghost, by the exercise of which we may gain everlasting life.

I. *General obedience.*—General or universal obedience implies such an obedience to all the precepts of God, that no prospect of immediate

honour or gain would be able to lead us to do anything that is contrary to His commandments. Such obedience as this is worthy of the hire of glory. But I wish to advise you here, that you must not believe that for any obedience or holiness of life, you ought to obtain eternal glory, as if it was your due; but you should rather regard it as coming to you by a divine ordination and promise, because God himself has promised it to you. Let no one dare to say, "O Lord, give me that glory which belongs to me, for I have faithfully served Thee;" but all should be able to say, "O Lord, I have obeyed and served Thee; give me therefore the glory for my reward since Thou hast promised it." The whole relationship is well expressed under the old conditions of slavery. Were an obedient and industrious slave to ask his master for more wages, his lord would reply: "Dost thou seek any recompense? art thou not a captive?" But, on the other hand, if a special covenant of mercy had been entered into between the master and his slave, when under these altered circumstances the claim was raised by the slave, the answer would be: "Thou hast served me well and been obedient, because I promised thee that for certain works I would give thee thy liberty and

to you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do.'” (S. Luke xvii. 10.) By what right, therefore, can I demand glory? But I can say: “O Lord, Thou mayest give me the glory which Thou hast promised to them that obey Thee; for Thou hast promised, ‘Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven.’” (S. Matt. vii. 21.) To whom Jesus Christ will say: “Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” (S. Matt. xxv. 21.)

Now S. Luke acquired this reward or hire of glory by the promise of his Lord and Saviour, since he was obedient, not only to the precepts, but also to the counsels of the Lord. According to S. Jerome, he led a singularly holy life. S. Luke was a learned man—a very skilful physician—yet he was not inflated nor puffed up with pride; yet it generally happens that we are proud of any faculty in which we excel, for “Knowledge puffeth up.” (1 Cor. viii. 1.) S. Luke so governed himself, that he did not through pride break any of God’s laws. His desire was to despise no one. It was the same with regard to covetousness. Many wealthy people consulted him as being a skilful physi-

cian; but he spent the money which he received from them in buying medicine for the poor; living a single, frugal life; and often, when he was injured, asking forgiveness of those who had wronged him. Such was S. Luke, a Syrian by nation, an Antiochene by birth; a skilful physician, living a blameless life, serving the Lord in virginity, having neither wife nor children. Truly we can say of him and of such as he was: "The labourer is worthy of his hire." The moral of his life may be all summed up in these few words of our Lord: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." (S. Matt. xix. 17.)

II. *Liberal compassion.*—We can also gain a glorious reward by the exercise of a liberal compassion and pity, when we give to the needy of our temporal or of our spiritual goods; for every one who, as a righteous treasurer, is dispensing the good gifts of his Lord according to his Master's will shall be deemed worthy of recompense. Every one who is rich is, or ought to be, a dispenser and minister of that great king Jesus Christ. You must not consider yourselves to be lords, nor suffer the foolishness of riches to enter into your heart, for he who is a master renders an account to no one, but you will have to give an account for

all things, as to how they were gotten, and even to the last farthing, should be able to give a good account to our Lord Jesus Christ. It is wrong to speak of things as if they were our very own, for in reality Jesus Christ is the Lord of all things. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof" (Ps. xxiv. 1); and ye rich ones are but the ministers and dispensers of His possessions. "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." (1 Cor. iv. 1.) If we dispense His blessings according to His will, we are worthy of our reward. This will teach us that we should dispense our riches—firstly, at home, in supplying the necessities, but not the vanities, of our families; secondly, in relieving the necessities of the poor, or lend to them without usury. Mark what the deed of our commission expresses. "Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother; usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of anything that is lent upon usury . . . unto thy brother thou shalt not lend upon usury; that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all thou settest thine hand to." (Deut. xxiii. 19-21.) Happy will they be, who having been rich in this world, when they are asked at the door of Paradise by Jesus Christ, What hast thou done with thy

riches? may be able to answer, "Lord, I have dispensed thy blessings according to thy will. I have lent without usury." Such shall receive the hire of glory. "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only [how much more he who is able to give wine and money] in the name of a disciple, Verily, I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." (S. Matt. x. 42.) "Do good and lend, hoping for nothing again, and your reward shall be great." (S. Luke vi. 35.) God will reward such with double interest in this life, and with glory in Paradise, for so great is the gain of compassion. It is recorded as a tradition of S. Luke, that when he heard of the fame of the twelve Apostles, and of their wonderful cures, he was astonished, for they so greatly exceeded the skill of the physicians. So being still an unbeliever, he went to Jerusalem to see the Apostles, and said to S. Peter, "I have heard of your cures, yet I see that you are poor." S. Peter answered, "A certain Great Physician coming from heaven, that He might reveal this art and heal after a wondrous manner, bid us also despise all gain." Thus he preached to Luke the faith of Jesus Christ, and confirmed his preaching by miracles. S. Luke was then baptized, and asked S. Peter what he

must do, who told him, saying, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." S. Luke returned to Antioch, and followed this advice to the letter. Having sold his house and goods, he next asked himself to what "poor" he should give the proceeds of the sale. Some were migratory and undeserving poor, their only claim being they, as men, were created in the image of God, whilst others led a good life, and served Jesus Christ; and so he gave his riches to them. He carried with him to Jerusalem a bag of money, and placed it at the feet of the Apostles, that they also might distribute to the poor. This is gathered from the fourth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, where it says generally, "as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices, and laid them down at the Apostles' feet." (Acts iv. 34, 35). If therefore any one by the exercise of a liberal compassion deserve to gain the kingdom of heaven, what shall be said of S. Luke? "The labourer is worthy of his hire." So we learn our lesson of bountiful compassion; and if we have procured anything by unjust means, if we hold anything belonging to the dead, to strangers, to the Church, to servants, or to labourers, anything

that was acquired either by theft or usury, let restitution be made, otherwise all our works and blessings will be tainted. Bear in mind the Apostolic injunction, "Render to all their due." (Rom. xiii. 7.)

III. *Divine Wisdom*.—A third grace is that divine wisdom which leads us to rule our lives according to the will of God; and further, by our good example and holy words, to draw others to God. It is as if a king were to entrust one of his fortresses to a soldier, saying, "You know well how to defend this castle against the attacks of the enemy." Now, if that soldier be strong and valiant, he not only faithfully guards that fortress, but also whilst so doing he gains some other camps for his king when giving battle to the enemy. Would not such a soldier as this deserve all honour at the hands of his royal master? Surely. It is so with us: each one of ourselves has a fortress, which is himself, committed to his keeping by Jesus Christ our King, Who values this fortress beyond any earthly value, for He is King of kings; saying in the deed of commission, "Take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently." (Deut. iv. 9.) In the end, when he will say to Jesus Christ the King, "Behold, O Lord, the soul which I have

guarded and preserved," he will merit reward. But when not only has he preserved the citadel through life, but beyond this, by his good life and teaching, has gained over camps from the enemy, then indeed is his reward the more assured. "He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." (S. James v. 20.) A proud person is a fortress in the hand of the devil Leviathan; and so on of all the other sins. This fortress is stormed and taken, when by a holy life and by preaching good doctrines the proud one is humbled, and brought into subjection to the law of Jesus Christ. So every sinner that is converted is a fortress which is gained. The authority was spoken to the victorious Abraham in the person of the preacher: "Fear not, Abraham [O preacher], I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." (Gen. xv. 1.) Note the expression: "Fear not." Why should the preacher fear? Because he is surrounded by so many enemies. Firstly, evil spirits; secondly, detractors, the envious, and a host of others; but "to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward." (Prov. xi. 18.) The preacher is this sower of righteousness in the fields of conscience.

S. Luke was super-eminent in this wisdom and grace. For thirty-seven years he preached throughout the world, with S. Paul as his companion; going from village to village. When others went away, he remained with S. Paul unto the end. "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me. Only Luke is with me." (2 Tim. iv. 16, 17.)

Truly also to-day he wages a certain war against the enemy, and gains many a fortress by his Gospel, which is more full than those of the other evangelists, and also because he is author of the Acts of the Apostles. The Gospel of S. Luke is rich in particulars which are not recorded in the other Gospels. To mention only a few instances, we find in S. Luke alone the adoration of the shepherds; the circumcision and presentation in the Temple; the life of our Blessed Lord from twelve years until He reached His thirtieth year. There is a tradition that S. Luke obtained these particulars of our Lord's life from the blessed Virgin, whose portrait he is also said to have painted. The Annunciation and the Nativity are also related only by S. Luke, and the first two of the seven last words upon the Cross, the Virgin being doubtless his authority on all these points. This very completeness renders

the Gospel according to S. Luke of very great value ; in fact, some very holy men have made it their special study on this account, and from the very beginning it was publicly read in all the Churches. Hence the expression as applied to S. Luke : " The brother, whose praise is in the Gospel throughout all the Churches." If divine wisdom be in any case worthy of a reward, surely in the case of S. Luke it must be especially so, for in him the highest wisdom was consecrated to the highest ends.

IV. *Worthy repentance.*—It was a worthy indication of true repentance, when fasting was joined with self discipline of various kinds, both bodily and mental. Many great saints were at the same time great ascetics. The authority for such discipline is found in our Blessed Lord's own words : " Blessed are ye that hunger now, for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall laugh ;" and He adds afterwards : " Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold your reward is great in heaven." (S. Luke vi. 21, 23.) Some one present may ask, either through captiousness or ignorance, Why should I fast and discipline myself? What did our Lord Jesus Christ reply to the young man seeking to do that good thing by which he might gain eternal

life? He rather said: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." (S. Matt. xix. 17.) He did not say anything about repentance. I answer, that to keep the commandments of God is all that is needed for preserving a good life for the future, but that our past sins demand a sincere and hearty repentance. Hence our Blessed Lord's first preaching consisted in a call to repentance. "Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (S. Matt. iv. 17); and He elsewhere enforced the great need of this discipline of grace when He said: "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (S. Luke xiii. 5.)

This disciplined life was led by S. Luke during those thirty-seven years in which he laboured with S. Paul amongst the infidels. He willed to become a martyr; but as he was not slain in the body, he mortified himself according to the counsel of the apostle: "Mortify therefore your members which are upon earth" (Coloss. iii. 5); and he mortifies his body who is a real penitent. This sincere repentance the Church recognises and acknowledges in her Collect for S. Luke's Day, in which she states that he bore the mortification of the Cross ever in his own body through the love of God's name.

Thee, O Almighty and Eternal God, we pray and entreat to make us so diligent and faithful in our service towards Thee, that one day we with S. Luke may be found worthy to receive our reward of eternal glory, as labourers who are worthy of their hire.

S. SIMON AND S. JUDE, APOSTLES.

ZEAL.

“All these things will they do unto you for My name’s sake.”
—*S. John xv. 21.*

Introduction.—SS. Simon and Jude examples of zeal.—According to S. Jerome and other of the Fathers, we celebrate to-day in one solemnity two Apostles who were united, and distinguished from their brethren for their great zeal. They were zealots in the true and best meaning of the word. S. Simon was called “Zelotes,” because he was born in Cana, which signifies “zeal;” whilst S. Jude, the brother of S. James the Less, is also called a Canaanite by S. Jerome, it may be because he also came from Cana, or, more likely, because he had such exceeding zeal for the cause of Jesus Christ. This is proved by his Catholic Epistle, in which, with a most fiery zeal, he inveighs against the heretics of his day.

To these two zealous Apostles, SS. Simon and Jude, we can apply that which was written concerning Enoch and Elijah. “These are the

two olive-trees and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth." (Rev. xi. 4.) They are the "two olive-trees," since they saved a great portion of the world by the fulness of the Gospel, and by the grace of God; the former in Mesopotamia, the latter in Egypt. "Two candlesticks," since they illuminated the world by the light of their preaching and by their ardent love for the salvation of souls; they being themselves kindled by the love of God. As two candlesticks are placed on the altar when proceeding to offer the Holy Sacrifice, so these two Apostles, burning with zeal, at length meeting in Persia, as if at the altar of Christ, both at the same time, enlightened His name by a glorious martyrdom. Let us, stimulated by their example, mark how we too can become full of holy zeal and fervour for the cause of our dear Lord.

I. *Wherefore zeal is to be manifested.*—In the first place, without zeal and fervour we cannot overcome the difficulties and obstacles which are opposed to our salvation. Our blessedness and salvation is on high in heaven; there is therefore need of effort, for the violent seize the kingdom of heaven by force. (S. Matt. xi. 12.) Our enemies and hindrances are many, especially the world and the flesh, which both drag

us downwards to pleasures and idleness. We swim against the stream, and we are in consequence buffeted by the billows which ever roll against us; where we cease to struggle, there we fall down and die. "Unless the struggle of mind rages, that wave of the world, by which the mind is ever carried down to the lowest depths, is not overcome." (Bede.) Unless Jacob had vigorously struggled with the angel, he would not have obtained the blessing. (Gen. xxxii. 26.) So mystically the Jacob, the wrestler, the supplanter of sins, must struggle for wisdom and his salvation, if he desires to obtain the blessing of God; he should be zealous in prayer for all holy deeds, and should wrestle with sins lest he be overcome by them.

In the second place, without zeal we cannot despoil the devil, nor overcome any difficulty. Zeal and emulation are compared by the Apostle to fire. (Heb. x. 27.) As flies will not approach a heated jar, but if it be cool, enter it, and deposit worms, so wicked spirits, which infest and follow a lukewarm spirit, flee from a soul which is kindled with the divine fire. "The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar" (Lev. vi. 13); the faithful shall never relax in the fervour or zeal of good works. "The ashes which the fire hath consumed" (id. ver. 10), the

priest removes every morning when he renews the fire ; “ for all things pass away, and behold all things are new.” (Orig.) A man in whom the fire of zeal burns, lives as it were alone in the world ; glory and ignominy are alike to him ; he despises temptations, strifes, and imprisonments, and as flies avoid a flame, so the affections of the flesh dare not approach him.

In the third place, without zeal we lose the grace of God. God takes away His grace by degrees from the lukewarm. “ Because thou art lukewarm I will spue thee out of My mouth.” (Rev. iii. 16.) God’s grace is in proportion to our zeal for His glory. “ Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip” (Heb. ii. 1) ; as liquid would run out of a cask which is badly joined, the hoops having given way.

In the fourth place, without zeal we readily fall into sin. Fervour and zeal preserve us from sin. The leaves fall in autumn because the moisture or sap of the tree fails ; so we, losing the moisture of divine grace, fall away from God and sink down into sin. The Jews having lost their zealous observance of the law, say of themselves, “ We all do fade as a leaf,” having lost our moisture “ our iniquities like

the wind have taken us away" (Isa. lxiv. 6), being balanced by no weight. Without any zeal for God's honour and glory, in a cold languid way, Eve answered the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees, &c." (Gen. iii. 2-3), therefore she fell into his snare.

II. *How zeal is to be manifested.*—In the first place, with moderation. Immoderate zeal will often destroy the very souls which it desires to save. James and John in their undue zeal would have destroyed the Samaritans by fire from heaven (S. Luke ix. 54), if their Lord had not strongly rebuked them. The servants who desired to uproot the tares before the harvest (S. Matt. xiii. 28) showed a zeal which was untempered by any discretion. The zeal with which Simeon and Levi avenged the wrong done to their sister (Gen. xxxiv. 25-28) resolved itself into a bloodthirsty and fanatical revenge. Acacius also was over zealous, who was so severe towards penitents, that Constantine said to him, "O Acacius, place a ladder from earth to heaven, and by it go up to heaven alone."

In the second place, with constancy and perseverance. Our zeal must be exercised with constancy and perseverance, that we may as far as possible prevail by applying every remedy

for sin. The Jews were offended because our Blessed Lord healed the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath day (S. John v. 2-10), also because His disciples plucked the ears of corn on the Sabbath day (S. Luke vi. 2), and so He healed the man with the dropsy on the Sabbath. Jesus Christ so loved the truth, and freely preached it for the correction of the erring, that He was not stayed from proclaiming it by death, but He ever set it forth by His sermons, miracles, prayers, reproofs, arguments, and lastly by His tears ; He was ever zealous on its behalf.

In the third place, with due regard to the glory of God. We must be zealous in seeking the glory of God rather than our own. Jonah split upon this rock. When God spared the Ninevites upon their repentance, Jonah said, "It is better for me to die than to live" (Jonah iii. 3); he was more zealous for his prophetic reputation than for the salvation of Nineveh. Micah was rightly zealous when he said, "Would God I were not a man that hath the Spirit, and that I rather spoke a lie." (Mic. ii. 11, Vulg.) Moses prayed to be blotted out of the book of life, and S. Paul to be anathema, rather than God should suffer any dishonour.

In the fourth place, with due regard to our

own salvation. We are nowhere bidden to love our neighbours more than ourselves. The conduit follows the spring; it does not overflow to the river or lake until it is itself filled. The five wise virgins would not give away oil they could not spare, "lest there be not enough for us and you." (S. Matt. xxv. 9.) Jacob wrestled with the angel first, and went to meet his angry brother afterwards. Our Blessed Lord passed the whole night in prayer, and then came to His disciples walking on the sea. It will be the lament of the clergy who unduly neglect themselves for the care of their flock, "they made me keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I kept not." (Cant. i. 6.) I have cared for the souls of others, and at the same time I have neglected my own. God commanded Samuel concerning Saul, "thou shalt anoint him to be captain over My people Israel, that he may save My people" (1 Sam. ix. 16); and Saul did save Israel, but he lost his own soul.

III. *When zeal is to be manifested.*—In the first place, when the honour of God is concerned. Such zeal did our Blessed Lord show in cleansing the Temple, not once, but twice driving out the buyers and sellers from it at all personal risk; and especially when He quoted

in defence of what He did the words of the sixty-ninth Psalm, saying, "the zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up." (S. John ii. 17.)

A like zeal was exhibited by Asa, king of Judah, who removed Maachah, his mother, "from being queen, because she had made an idol in a grove; and Asa cut down her idol, and stamped it and burned it at the brook Kidron." (2 Chron. xv. 16.) David was so moved by his zeal for God's honour that, being a mere stripling, he went out against Goliath, saying, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" (1 Sam. xvii. 26.) When the Emperor Theodosius refused to restrain the Arians, Amphilochius, the Bishop of Iconium, coming into his presence one day, failed to salute his son, who was seated by him, invested with imperial dignity. Theodosius reminded the Bishop of his omission, who at once replied, "Behold, O Emperor, you cannot brook any want of respect towards your son; be sure that the God of all, abhors the blasphemies uttered against His Only-Begotten Son, and that He turns away from those who thus dishonour Him." (Theod.) The zeal of Amphilochius for the honour of Jesus Christ procured the partial suppression of Arianism.

In the second place, when the faith of the Church is assailed. As bees fight for their home, so should we fight for our faith, which is sweeter than honey. The Jews of old preferred to die rather than suffer their Temple to be defiled by receiving an image of Jupiter. For the honour of the Temple, "Elias the prophet stood up as a fire, and his word burnt like a torch." (Ecclus. xlviii. 1.) S. Ambrose and S. Thomas of Canterbury were both nobly zealous in defence of the faith of their Church. S. Jude exhorts Christians that they "should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints." (Ver. 3.)

In the third place, when souls are to be saved. S. Paul thus expressed his burning zeal for saving souls: "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." (Rom. ix. 3.) Our Blessed Lord was so zealous to save souls that He was "straitened" until His baptism of blood was accomplished, which brought salvation with it. When the gain of souls, and their deliverance from the power of Satan is the concern, we cannot show too much zeal. Let zeal glow in us, and the love of righteousness be the hatred of sin. (S. Bern.) S. Cyprian longed even to suffer mar-

tyrdom in the act of preaching, that is, of saving souls.

In the fourth place, when our own salvation is to be guarded. We must be zealous when the matter on hand is the guarding or procuring of our salvation ; and then we ought to breathe very fire against our adversaries, to overthrow all things which oppose it, to break down every barrier, and to consume every hindrance. When S. Peter tried to dissuade our Blessed Lord from His Passion, His answer was, "Get thee behind Me, Satan" (S. Matt. xvi. 23), or "adversary," for such S. Peter proved himself to be to Jesus Christ in not understanding the will of the Father and the Son. S. Peter Damiani likewise called Pope Gregory VII. Satan, because he tried to hinder his retirement from the world, and his adoption of the solitary life. Against every form of temptation, and against all who tempt us, a zealous anger must always be manifested.

Reviewing the lives and death of SS. Simon and Jude, and noting how earnestly they laboured for the glory of God and the propagation of His faith, no one can doubt that the needful zeal was to be found in them in all its abundance ; a zeal which triumphed over all obstacles, which vanquished Satan, which pro-

cured the grace of God, and preserved them from deadly sins ; that they exercised this zeal with moderation, perseverance, with due regard to the glory of God and their own salvation ; and lastly, that they manifested their zeal to uphold the honour of God, the faith of the Church, the salvation of souls, and their protection from danger. If because of our weakness we cannot equal their zeal, let us at least strive to emulate and imitate them according to our powers.

ALL SAINTS' DAY.

THE EARTHLY SESSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

“When He was set, His disciples came unto Him.”—
S. Matt. v. 1.

I. *Our Blessed Lord ever “sat down” to teach.*
—When about to preach the most wonderful sermon ever delivered, our Blessed Lord went into a mountain, and “when He was set, His disciples came to Him.” (*S. Matt. v. 1.*) In the synagogue at Nazareth, after reading the passage from *Isa. lxi.*, “He closed the book, and gave it again to the minister, and *sat down.*” (*S. Luke iv. 20.*)

At the lake of Gennesaret, when He had entered into Simon Peter's ship, “He *sat down* and taught the people out of the ship.” (*S. Luke v. 3.*)

Looking upon the five thousand from the mountainous region north-east of the sea of Galilee, which He was so soon to feed with five barley loaves and two small fishes, “He *sat* with His disciples.” (*S. John vi. 3.*)

From the mount of Olives likewise, when He came into the Temple, "He *sat down* and taught." (S. John viii. 2.) So whether on the mountain, in the ship, in the synagogue, or the Temple, wherever He was solemnly teaching our Blessed Lord sat down. All the Evangelists are most minute and particular in mentioning this apparently trifling circumstance. Many of old, like those of our day who look upon the decent observance of the rites of our worship with dislike and scorn, would doubtless ask, What did it matter whether our Blessed Lord stood up or "sat down?" A point so trivial or minute surely is not worth a moment's thought of the educated and intellectual mind. Now there is nothing recorded in Holy Scripture which is too minute, or too trifling; and our dear Lord's "sitting down" as a great Teacher whilst on earth must be indeed related to His session on the right hand of God the Father in His glory—"Where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." (Col. iii. 1.) Jesus Christ sat down whilst teaching men on earth, and then afterwards, "when He had by Himself purged our sins, [He] sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high." (Heb. i. 3.) Wherefore has this sitting down of our Blessed Lord been recorded? What moral and spiritual lessons

are there contained in this act of His? A threefold significance belongs to this fact that our dear Lord sat down to teach His disciples. It was an act of quiet or rest, of expectation, and of attraction.

II. Firstly. *Our Blessed Lord's session was an act of rest.*—Our Blessed Lord sits when teaching, and teaches when He sits, for thus it appertains to the dignity of our Master; but He chiefly sat for an example to other teachers, and His lesson was this: that that instruction is more readily infused into the hearts of the hearers which is given in quiet and gentle teaching. That which the teacher delivers with quietness is seized hold upon by the firmer memory. This “sitting” down of the body indicates that repose of mind from which enlightening teaching proceeds from the mouth of the enlightening and enlightened teacher. “He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him.” (Lam. iii. 28.) “He sitteth;” he is calm and composed both in mind and body; he resteth the mind altogether from idle thoughts, and the body from all disturbing motion. This tranquillity of mind is further increased by solitude. “He sitteth alone,” separated from others, “as a sparrow alone upon the house-top.” (Ps. cii. 7.) So

Moses, when about to ascend to the holy vision and to talk with God alone, "went up into the mount of God" (Exod. xxiv. 13); he was separated not only from earthly things, but even from Aaron, from the earthly servants and ministers of God. This tranquillity of mind is not even to be disturbed by speech. "And keepeth silence;" he waits and listens to the voice of the sacred teacher, to God's pleading with his soul.

In these days of noise, babble, and excitement, it would be well for us to learn this lesson of tranquillity, to seek for quiet teaching, which may fall like dew upon the fresh mown grass, and as the gentle showers which water the earth. To remember that "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation" and excitement, but is amongst us as a silent, secret, slowly working influence.

In his agony and martyrdom S. Stephen saw the heavens opened, "and Jesus *standing* on the right hand of God" (Acts vii. 56), as a great high priest pleading for His suffering seryant. But the vision for us in our homes, business, and daily life, is one of Jesus "*sitting*," speaking to our hushed souls in tones both soft and low, the loving words which are both spirit and life (S. John vi. 63); the vision is of Jesus,

Friend and Teacher. The truly humble soul will realize Jesus "sitting" and calling us to Himself by His words uttered so long ago, and yet now speaking to us as with a silent voice, awaking the sweet thought of one gone away from us for a time, and who will nevertheless one day be united with us for ever.

III. Secondly. *The session of our Blessed Lord was an act of expectation.*—Jesus Christ waits for us to come to Him with all our infirmities and delays. (1) We are all too slow to believe in the things of Jesus Christ. (2) We are too slow to understand what is most useful for us to know. (3) Too slow to do those things which we ought to have done. (4) All too slow in repentance when we have left the right path, when we have poured out our souls in sin. In spite of all this, Jesus Christ still is "sitting" down and waiting for us, seeking to show mercy rather than judgment. "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?" (Ezek. xviii. 23), He asks. "I have no pleasure in him that dieth, saith the Lord God." (Ezek. xviii. 32.)

Let us not be like the man "not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth to repentance." (Rom. ii. 4.) Jesus is "sitting," "therefore will the Lord wait that He may be gracious

unto you." (Isa. xxx. 18.) How patiently whilst on earth did He wait for the hardened Jews to be converted ; how long He has borne with, and waited in mercy for the salvation of this sin-ridden world. Let us resolve to keep Him waiting for ourselves no longer, lest His patience be exhausted by our cruel delays and our foolish and dangerous procrastination.

IV. Thirdly. *The session of our Blessed Lord was an act of attraction.*—"When He was set, His disciples came unto Him." (S. Matt. v. 1.) He was not standing up to rebuke, but He was sitting to instruct them, to hold a conference with His disciples, to persuade and to appeal to all that was best and highest in their nature. There He sat on the hill-side, so that all "men might look unto Him and be lightened" (Ps. xxxiv. 5), and might have the darkness of their souls enlightened by the light of His blessed words. It is not by dogmatism nor by assumption that the best minds are swayed, such driving is alone suited to inferior souls ; the higher natures may be led, not driven. So our dear Lord, by His gentle, loving words, whilst "sitting" down and teaching His loved ones in quietness, drew them to Himself with "the cords of a man and the bands of love."

S. ANDREW'S DAY.

THE LORD'S DWELLING.

“Rabbi, where dwellest Thou?”—*S. John i. 38.*

I. *The love which the question implied.*—There are two kinds of love; the one when we love anything, not for its own sake, but only for the use or relationship in which it stands to ourselves; the other and higher love is the love of personal friendship, is a benevolent affection which leads us to desire for the loved object the same blessings, or even greater ones, than we ourselves possess. Such love as this is wholly unselfish, it seeks neither its own profit nor delight. It was with this latter and true love that S. John Baptist loved our Blessed Lord when first he saw Him “coming unto him,” for he was truly “the friend of the Bridegroom” (Theoph.); one not seeking his own glory, but pointing out to the disciples Whom they ought to follow. “Behold the Lamb of God”—the Lamb, as being sinless—“Which

taketh away the sin of the world." (S. John i. 29.) Hence, in the Eucharistic Office, the Church three times invokes this mystic Lamb, "Thou that takest away the sins of the world:" words once repeated failing to express all the love, adoration, and worship of sorrow which is contained in the inspired salutation, "Lamb of God."

Two of the disciples, hearing S. John's cry, followed Jesus Christ; and being more earnest than the others, who heard it but followed Him not, the Lord turned round and talked with them, and then they ventured to ask Him, "Rabbi, where dwellest Thou? we would know where Thou dwellest, that we may frequent Thy presence." The gracious answer returned to their inquiry was, "Come and see," and "they came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day" (S. John i. 39), and received from Him much heavenly instruction as a reward for their loving request. Let us spiritually put a like question to our dear Lord, and say to Him with S. Andrew, whom we commemorate to-day, "Rabbi, where dwellest Thou?" For our instruction our Blessed Lord showed to the disciples where He dwelt; it was in a fourfold dwelling-place, to each of which abodes He strives to lead the seeking

and sorrowing soul by turns to dwell in, as it passes along the pathway of this world travelling onwards to its perfection.

II. *Our Lord dwelt in the hardship of poverty.*

—The adverse house of poverty was our Blessed Lord's first abode. Hence He said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." (S. Matt. viii. 20.) He is poorer than any of these. His birth in the stable, His cradle in the manger, the whole course of His public life, during which He had neither food nor shelter but what He begged for, alike bear testimony to His poverty. As He had no place where He could rest, so had He no means by which He could live. He had not even a *stater* to pay the tribute without working a miracle to supply the want. (S. Matt. xvii. 27.) "Being wearied with His journey," the Lord sat down by Jacob's well, and said, "Give me to drink." (S. John iv. 6-7.) Preaching in the Temple till late in the evening, in the sight of all He went away fasting. He often slept upon the bare ground, and at length, being stripped of all things, He hung naked on the cross. "Come and see," for "whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple."

(S. Luke xiv. 33.) Behold to how great a height of perfection did our Blessed Lord call His disciples in the hardship of poverty, to whom alone belongs the prerogative of judging the powers. "Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" (1 Cor. vi. 3.) For firstly, cleaving to Jesus Christ, and forsaking all earthly things for His sake, there is nothing to interfere with the justice of their judgment. Secondly, a life of poverty is placed in the first of the Beatitudes, as being the door of all perfection, which disposes the heart to learn all divine truth, in which is contained those articles of divine justice by which all men will be judged. This power will not, however, be granted to all the poor, but only to those who have forsaken all things voluntarily in order to follow Jesus in a more perfect life; amongst whom will shine such perfection of every grace as will condemn the imperfection of the ungodly. There are many men who, like S. Andrew, having left everything and followed their Blessed Lord in His hunger, thirst, cold, and nakedness, longing only to behold and remain with Him, that have not as yet found the place of His tarrying, and therefore they cry to Him, and say, "Rabbi, where dwellest Thou?"

III. *Our Blessed Lord dwelt in the furnace of*

patience.—In the furnace of patience was our Lord's second dwelling-place, in which He was tried by injuries, persecutions, derisions, and mockings, being pointed at as "a man gluttonous and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." (S. Matt. xi. 19). He was tried as in a furnace of fire when it was said to Him, "This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of devils." (S. Matt. xii. 24). Yet the slightest trace of indignation and impatience was never found in Him; even when He was on all sides surrounded with sorrows and in His extremest agonies. Hence, pierced by the sorrows of his mother; hence, by the insults of His persevering tormentors; hence provoked to anger by paternal affections, compelled by loving piety, He uttered the all-availing prayer, "Father, forgive them." (S. Luke xxiii. 34.) Such was He Who said to Andrew "Come and see;" come and embrace this most exemplary patience, and learn all about my dwelling. Even poverty itself is tolerable when it is lightened by the help and sympathy of kinsfolk and friends; but lest His lot should be thus softened He condemned Himself to a perpetual exile, going about preaching hither and thither. Oh! Christian hearer, "come and see," leaving parents and friends and the sweet

country to tarry amongst the unfriendly and the ignorant. "Behold I send you forth as lambs among wolves. Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes, and salute no man by the way." (S. Luke x. 3, 4.) Were they to take nothing with them into the places where they would be despised, repulsed, condemned, beaten, persecuted, imprisoned? Hearken, my brethren, unto what the Lord commanded them to take. "In your patience possess ye your souls." (S. Luke xxi. 19.) This patience our Lord assigned to His disciples as an inseparable companion; for He desired to unite them to Himself by the same bond of love which exists between the bride and bridegroom, and so it was needful that they should be taught that, on account of the Loved One, adversities should not only be patiently but lovingly endured even unto death. Death was His measure of love. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (S. John xv. 13.) Afterwards S. Andrew with the other disciples "departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were worthy to suffer for His name" (Acts v. 4), if so be that they might only come and see where Jesus dwelt; but not as yet having fully learned this, they were constrained to ask, "Rabbi, where dwellest Thou?"

IV. *Our Blessed Lord dwelt in the exercise of love.*—Our Blessed Lord so glowed with love for us and for our salvation that on no occasion would He spare Himself, on our account, pain and sorrow. This love was not withdrawn by any blasphemies, injuries, or persecutions; they did not cause Him to relax in the least the rigour and the fervour with which He willed to work out our salvation. As if in contempt of bodily weakness, He said, “I have meat to eat which ye know not of.” (S. John iv. 32.) When devoting Himself to preaching and praying, He passed many days in fasting and nights in vigil, with His virgin limbs lying on the cold earth.

What is the wonder, since Jesus Christ had as many members as there are stars in heaven, as there are blades of grass in the fields, and as there are drops in the ocean, and each one body had its proper members, that He delivered all to suffering before He had sent in advance one soul to perish through His defect. “Declare among the people His doing.” (Ps. ix. 12.) “Come and see” Him Whom S. Andrew followed, being not only a most ardent zealot for the salvation of souls, surveying the lands in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness, in persecutions and derisions, but also for two

days in the agony of the cross witnessing Jesus Christ to all the people, preaching fervently to some twenty thousand souls, knowing full well that this zeal for souls was most acceptable to God, as flowing from the strongest love, which adorns so well the wedding garment. This love is like that garment which resists the action of fire, enabling those who are clothed with it to bear and to triumph over all suffering. S. Andrew had endured much, very much; yet still he needs to ask the question, "Rabbi, where dwellest Thou?"

V. *Our Blessed Lord dwelt in the stadium of expiation.*—The contest of expiation or punishment was our dear Lord's dwelling-place as He hung suspended upon the cross, suffering in all His members. Lest His tongue should give vent to saving truths, and still remain unpunished, He drinks vinegar mingled with myrrh. As He endured in each member of His sacred Body, so He suffered in every faculty of His soul; though the soul itself was, from His divine nature, exempt from suffering the bitterness of which, if I may say so, was in the extreme of punishment. In His flesh there was a very great equality of habit and a perfect quickness of the senses, which increase bodily suffering; whilst in His soul was there the

highest love, which made Him jealous for the honour of His Father and of any injury done to Him, and gave Him such holy compassion towards His fellow man, for whom He was grieving, notwithstanding his resistance to Him. In both body and soul there was, therefore, the most intense anguish. Hence those tearful eyes, of which we read, "In the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared." (Heb. v. 7.) This love constrained Him to cry out to the cruel crucifiers, "I thirst;" that is, "Behold in My sufferings, than which nothing more sorrowful can be found in soul, nothing more painful in body, nothing more degrading in aspect, I have shown the love of My heart towards you, for I now end My loving life by a most bitter and shameful death. Still 'I thirst' to suffer for your sakes a thousand thousand different deaths, thus to declare to you, O ungrateful ones! the divine love which I have for your salvation, that your stony hearts may be irresistibly drawn to the Fount of healing."

He said to S. Andrew, "Come and see;" who, hastening to the place where the cross

was prepared, and beholding it, exclaimed, "Hail, O Cross! bring me to my Master, that through thee He may receive me Who by thee hast redeemed me." He was unwilling to be separated from it whilst living, if only he might see where Jesus dwelt but for three hours, albeit in the most acute suffering. For two days S. Andrew was suspended upon the cross, refusing to be taken down by Egeas, teaching the people all the time from this throne of agony. Most severe was his passion, but it had not yet brought him to that place in which for ever he could remain with Jesus Christ; so that he had again to ask, "Rabbi, where dwellest Thou?"

VI. *Our Blessed Lord dwells in the midst of the Ever Blessed Trinity.*—Our Blessed Lord's fifth dwelling-place is in the bosom of the Ever Blessed Trinity, now exalted, in His humanity, to His mediatorial throne. "Thou hast crowned Him with glory and honour; Thou madest Him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands," both earthly and heavenly; "Thou hast put all things in subjection under His feet." (Ps. viii. 5, 6.) "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." (S. Matt. xxviii. 10.) Poverty I say is changed into riches, humility into dignity, suffering into glory. "Come and

see," says our dear Lord to S. Andrew, who replies, "O Lord, I have followed Thee whithersoever Thou wentest, in cold and nakedness, in labour and persecution, in the passion and agony of the cross. But still, O Lord, I suffer violence. O! help my weakness, and draw me after Thee." Having prayed for some time, it is said that an unusual splendour surrounded him, and his spirit departed from the body with the waning light; it departed that he might go and see where Jesus abode, and might make his dwelling with his Saviour for ever.

S. THOMAS THE APOSTLE.

PERSEVERANCE.

“Be not faithless, but believing.”—S. *John* xx. 27.

I. *The wounded side of Jesus Christ.*—When the Redeemer of the world upon the eighth day after His Resurrection showed Himself to His disciples, He turned immediately to the apostle Thomas, whose faith concerning His Resurrection was still weak, and He commanded him not only to feel with his fingers the marks in His most sacred hands, but He also said, “Reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side.” (S. *John* xx. 27.) Upon our Blessed Lord granting this double proof of His personal identity on account of the weakness of the faith of the Apostle, I ask whether it would not have been sufficient to have afforded experimental proof of His reality and identity if S. Thomas had placed his finger into the wounds of the hands alone? Why was it needful for him to feel the wound in the side in addition? Mark

the mystery that lies wrapped up in this apparently simple fact. Now there is a great difference between the wounds in the hands and that in the side. The wounds of the hands not only had an entrance, but also an exit, since the nails perforated the entire hand. It was wholly different with the wound in the side, for although the spear laid bare the most sacred heart of Jesus Christ, still it did not perforate it; wherefore it seems as if our dear Lord desired to say to S. Thomas, "Come hither, O Thomas! thrust thy finger into My side, since it does not satisfy Me for you to place your fingers into My hands alone, for those you can penetrate, there is an exit from them; but I desire that you should enter into My heart, and there remain in that place into which having entered there is no escape." The soul of the true Christian flees to the wound in the side of Jesus Christ, as the turtle-dove does to her nest. The nest of the turtle-dove is the breast of the body of his beloved, in which, entering in through the opening in the side, the soul in safety builds her nest and securely gathers together her young. If, O hearer, thou desirest to cleave perseveringly to this haven of rest, then thou must say with S. Thomas, "My Lord and my God!" He in these simple words

promised that perseverance to which I exhort you to-day, for neither repentance nor any other Christian grace is of any avail if perseverance be absent.

II. *A Scriptural example of perseverance.*—

The Spouse in the Canticles gave a signal example of perseverance when she asks the question, “I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on?” (Cant. v. 3.) What is this coat? Let the Apostle answer: “And have put off the old man with his deeds” (Col. iii. 9); it is the coat of fleshly concupiscence of which S. Jude makes mention when he writes, “hating even the garments spotted by the flesh.” (S. Jude ver. 23.) It is the garment woven of our old sins which is in this passage called a “coat.” The Church representing a repentant soul, asks how, when once it has cast away the detestable coat or garment of sin, how can it possibly resume it? S. Ambrose bids us note the very firm tone which is taken by the Spouse, who not only has a soul which is incapable of committing further sin, but who deems such a relapse to be an impossibility: “Mark what the devout soul says, How can I put it on; having so taken off the deeds of the body, and the unholy customs of the world, that it knows not

how, even if it were willing so to do, to put them on again. It retains indeed its former liberty of sinning; but when it reflects upon that wretched state of sin from which it was delivered by the great mercy and love of God, it judges it to be wellnigh impossible that it should ever fall back into its former sins." It asks "how," and S. Ambrose, dwelling upon the force of this word, adds "how?" "with what modesty? with what shame? and lastly, with what memory? could this relapse be made."

Do thou, O Christian soul, emulate the example of the penitent spouse, since thou art a partaker of no lesser benefits from the merciful God, whilst He supports thee, comforting thee by His divine grace, urging thee, by a serious confession of thy transgressions, to put off the old garment of thy sins. S. Thomas the Apostle knew full well the value of this particular grace; so that on this eighth day of his Lord's resurrection, having hated his former unbelief, he broke out into these words, into this utterance, so full of love and of perseverance, "My Lord and my God!"

III. *Man very easily falls away from goodness.*—What can the Christian preacher do

but mourn in very grief over the sad examples of human inconstancy which are ever occurring before his eyes?

How very often does a penitent soul fall away on account of a brief passion, and separates itself again from God, and so, as a necessary consequence of such a relapse, it is condemned once more of God. Let the Royal Prophet be our witness in this matter. We read that God "chose not the tribe of Ephraim" (Ps. lxxviii. 67) when he was about to allow of the building of His Tabernacle. Do you ask what was the cause of this reprobation and rejection? Let us consult the prophet Hosea, and there we learn that "Ephraim shall fly away like a bird." (Hos. ix. 11.) Ephraim was doubtless a great sinner; he had "made many altars to sin" (Hos. viii. 11); but do not many sinners become, on their repentance, a living temple and a tabernacle of God? The answer lies in his instability: he "shall fly away like a bird." Mark the force of this similitude. We often see a very numerous flock of small birds settling down on the threshing-floor of the wheat, where they chirp joyfully as they satisfy their hunger, but directly any one approaches them, and especially if he claps his hands, they all fly away, and seized by an empty fear, they

leave their food. O Christian soul, does this homely simile meet thy case? Wherefore, I ask, do you abandon your pious exercises, your private prayers and meditations? Wherefore do you separate yourself from the holy participation of the Heavenly Table? You answer, because my companions ridicule me; they laugh at me as being a little saint; they jeer at me as being a hypocrite. O senseless one! Are not these things worth more than the foolish clapping of hands? Then wherefore do you flee? O thou unstable little bird! "Ephraim shall fly away like a bird." Fear not any vain ridicule, but rather fear lest God choose you not to be a tabernacle for His grace now, and fear still more lest He elect you not to be hereafter a temple of His glory.

O how very often have I seen thee, and others like thee, when power, or gain, or vanity is in question, far more cunning and far more constant, although infinitely greater obstacles lay across your path. Tell me, now, if any man, provoked by an adversary, and summoned to-morrow to a deadly combat, were to remain fasting for twenty-four hours, what would you think of him? Tell me, O hearer, what would you yourself do, if such could be your own case? If you have to fight with an enemy to-morrow

in such a way that all your strength would be required, would you weaken yourself? If so, how could you handle the sword? How could you hope to conquer? Manifestly, if any one weakened himself under such circumstances, he would be simply wasteful of his own life. O Christian hearer, behold thyself, prodigal of thine own soul. Thou art challenged by the devil to the hour of thy death, he "having great wrath, because he knoweth he hath but a short time." (Rev. xii. 12.) Satan spares no industry that he may destroy thee, and do you omit to strengthen yourself by the pious exercises of graces? So acting, you become weak and infirm, and then you are easily conquered by the adversary. Stand firm, therefore; give up not one single sacred exercise of Christian grace; whatever may be the outward circumstances which oppose themselves, frequent the Heavenly Table of the Lord that you may collect your powers for the last single conflict.

"What, I ask you, would it advantage a soldier, who, having girded himself with armour, hastens forwards to the battle, if in the time of conflict he threw away his arms, and basely yield his conquered hands to the enemy? Distinguished soldiers do not leave the place of the fighting until they have gained

the victory." (S. Lawrence Just.) What would it have profited the prudent virgins, that at a great cost they had obtained oil for their lamps, if when the bridegroom came they poured it all out upon the ground?

IV. *The end and issue is the test of the work.*
—Learn, O Christian soul, what I desire to teach you in all earnestness by these similitudes; it is that all those holy exercises of religion, so many of which you have now ready at hand, were indeed aims nobly seized, to guard you against the assaults of the adversary; that they are the oil of charity for the reception of the bridegroom of the soul; and that nothing is of any avail unless perseverance be joined to it; "beginnings are not sought for in Christians, but the end." (S. Jerome). A well-regulated clock does not stop or rest in its going, until the weight which gives the motive power to the machinery, has run down to the ground, and if the wheels cease to move before this happens, this implies some defect in the mechanism of the time-piece. So in like manner a man should not stay his career of righteousness, until his weights are resting upon the earth. But what are these weights of his? The body and the bodily senses; for "The corruptible body is a load upon the

soul." (Wisd. ix. 15.) Until this weight rests on the ground and the body is laid in the tomb, the mind never ceases being moved ; but if the motion of the soul be stayed before death, then it is a sign that such an one is reprobated of God ; he is like an imperfect clock. They who persevere, and they alone, are approved of God for his eternal glory. " He that endureth to the end, shall be saved." (S. Matt. x. 22.)

V. *The infinite loss when perseverance is wanting.*—Christian soul ! that you may remain firm and unshaken in this grace of perseverance, which the festival of S. Thomas brings with it, as the subject of our moral teaching, place thyself, for a moment in thought, at the mouth of the infernal pit and look within. Oh ! how many thousands of souls you will see burning there, who having begun well have ended most miserably ; who, like unstable Ephraim, flew away like a bird ; being like a defective time-piece. What do they now think of the applause of the world or of the dictates of men, which so often lead you astray at the present time ? Alas ! they know too late to their own sad cost, their bitter folly, and the poor miserable ones bewail themselves in these words : " We have erred from the way of truth." (Wisd. v. 6.)

O Christian! err not then, but stand thou firm in that error which needs no correction, be thou strong and persevere bravely unto the end; "faithful unto death, and I will give thee," says Jesus Christ, "a crown of life."

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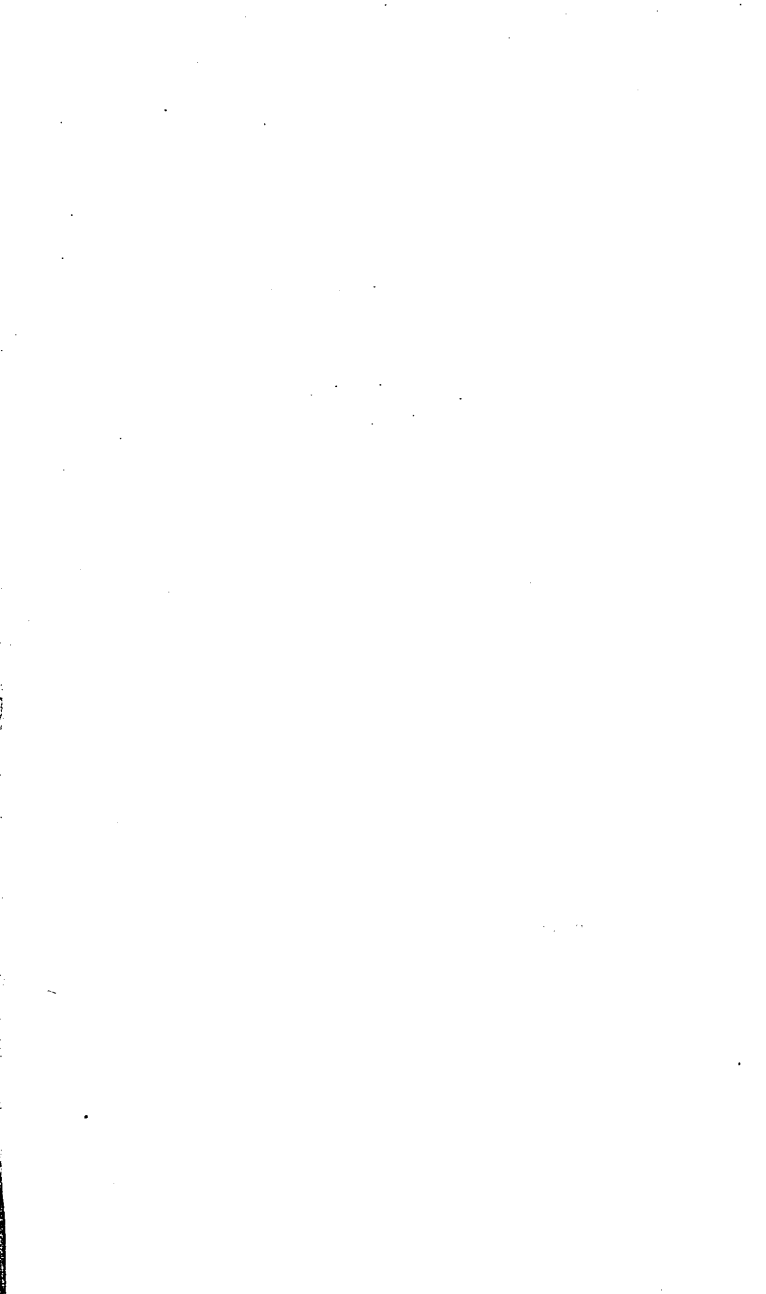
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